

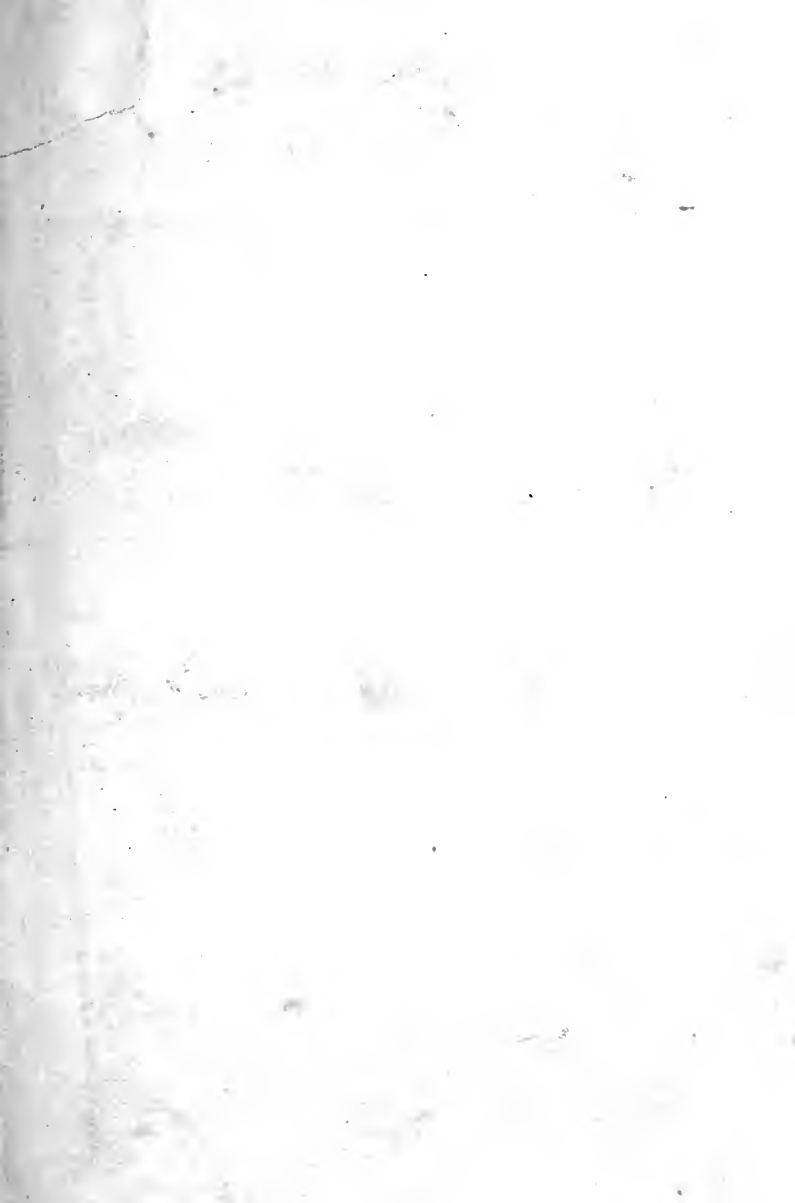


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A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART.

AN ACCOUNT OF
THE WRECK OF THE SAILING SHIP,
"WALDERSHARE,"

FROM THE NARRATIVE OF MR. WILLIAM LEE,
SECOND MATE.

BY
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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART.



CHAPTER I.

LAND HO!

THE coming on of the night at sea has always a solemnity in it. Ashore the darkness leaves things familiar: the well-known house, the old mill, the village lights, are at hand to defeat the illusions of the gloom; but at sea when the night falls it is like looking into space; there is nothing to see; the flash of phosphorus in the near wave, the glimmer of foam alongside the ship, do not help to make real the huge dark shadow that leans away to the stars—that swelling surface of ebony whose might and presence you feel, but only see darkly.

But it is only the man who has been in

peril on the deep who can understand the awe, the dread, the sense of helplessness and littleness that come into the mind along with the deep shadow of the night upon the sea. The power that lifts the huge iron ship of war, filled with an army of men, as easily as it lifts the little cork that floats alongside, is felt as a mystery: the distances are visionary and, but for the heavenly bodies which hang near the horizon, could not be defined.

Although I had just been endeavouring to cheer my sweetheart with words of hope, yet as the flush of the sunset left the sky, and the horizon melted into gloom, and the rigging of the brig became as delicate as cobwebs, and vanished before the eye had reached to half the height of the masts, and the surface of the ocean was expressed in the breaking waves which ran in coils of ink laced with blue fires, and the pallid gleam of froth against the almost buried stern of the brig, and the deep set of her sides,—the nearness of the dark and swallowing water oppressed me; there recurred something of the dismay that had visited

me two nights before, when I was afraid of the dark, and had clung to the light in the cabin.

However, my professional contempt of nervous sentimentality came to my rescue, and I soon despatched the nonsense that a few minutes' silent contemplation of the dark sea had put into my mind.

I told Matthews to get the green light trimmed, and to run it up to the masthead, after which I took Nelly to her berth, as I was determined that she should have a long night's rest. When we had said good-night I came back and joined the boatswain, and walked the deck with him for half an hour ; and we talked of the *Waldershare*, and the chances of the long-boat, and then of the brig and her crew. I told him of the money aboard, and of the things in the captain's lockers, and to whom the cargo was consigned, and, in short, I gave him her history as I had read it in her papers.

This set him talking of a shipwreck he had experienced ; it was a long story, but like hundreds of others you may get from old sailors. Had such a tale been related

to me on the *Waldershare* I should have felt bored; but all the time he was yarning, I was saying to myself, "What would I have given last night to have had this man by my side, and to hear his voice?" and when I thought of the fears my loneliness had brought, and glanced around upon the dark decks where last night I was alone, craving for a human voice, it so gladdened me to hear him talking, that I could have gone on listening all night.

"Keep a bright look-out for ships," said I, "and call me if there is any change in the weather. I don't think we need fear much sea if this breeze don't freshen; and let the brig have as much as she'll carry." I also told him to keep the log going, and as I could not find a slate, I ruled a sheet of paper, and left it on the cabin table, along with one of the chronometers, which, being set to the time of my watch, made a splendid time-keeper.

Before turning in I hove the log with the boatswain, and wrote down the speed and the brig's course, that being the first entry. Being without sextant and meridian time, I

had nothing to depend upon but this reel-log, and as I feared I might ultimately have to shape my course for the South Sea Islands, and as I certainly knew that I was absolutely at the mercy of the wind, it was extremely important that I should preserve some idea of my whereabouts.

I fell asleep instantly and slept like a top, having had only four hours' rest in the previous night. At eight bells, or midnight, according to the chronometer, I was aroused by the boatswain. I at once got up and went on deck, and found that the breeze had freshened during the first watch into a strong wind; there was more light in the sky, or perhaps the air was made clearer by the breaking of the waves, for now there was a regular tumble of sea. On either hand of us the surges ran their frothing heads as high as the rail of the bulwarks, already the decks were streaming, and the boatswain told me that not five minutes before a whole heap of green water had toppled over the weather quarter, and had floated the quarter-deck as high as the knees of Matthews, who was steering.

This could not be helped, and if the breeze did not freshen I would not complain, for it was not to be hoped that we were going to keep the decks of a water-logged brig dry in any kind of sea-way.

I told the boatswain to turn in and get rest whilst he could, and then went to the wheel and secured Johnson to the little grating abaft it, by taking a turn with a rope's end round his waist. The wind was still dead east—a warm wind—and had the brig been afloat properly, we should have thought it a splendid sailing breeze. I watched to see how she steered, and found that she gave very little trouble, the trim of the yards keeping her steady, and the big mizzen helping the lee helm wonderfully. The last heave of the log showed her pushing through it at four knots, with still three points leeway, and had she been going ten she could not have made more sputter: her wake was like a steamer's; it was not sailing, but what the boatswain had called squelching.

I went on to the deck-house to have a better command of the horizon. My anxiety

was very great, for if the breeze brought up any more sea, our situation would be one of extreme peril. The greatest risk we ran was that of what sailors call being pooped; that is, being swept by a sea toppling over the stern and sweeping forward. If once we lost command of the helm, the brig would broach to, and then away would go her masts; should her masts go, it was ten to one if they did not smash her bulwarks, and then our position would be hopeless indeed.

And yet there was no choice between stripping her of her canvas or letting her go as she was. If we put her under bare poles she would fall broadside on to the sea just as she lay when I boarded her, and in that posture she would ship enough water at the first lurch to fill her decks; if I kept all fast with her canvas we stood the chance of being pooped, of losing the wheel, and our spars, and destroying the bulwarks. This, however, was but a risk, whereas the seas were sure to sweep the deck if we handed the canvas and let her fall broadside on; so I resolved to let her go as she was.

I watched the sea as a man would a

crouching beast, expecting every moment the spring that must destroy him. I was very anxious about the boats, too, for if they should be injured our last hope would have to be abandoned. From time to time a great lump of black water would tumble over the weather bulwarks, and flash into a broad surface of fiery foam as it struck the deck, and every now and again a sea would hit the brig's stern a thumping blow, and shoot up into spray, which the wind would fling down upon me and Johnson as though a heavy tropical thunder-shower were falling.

I had been on the top of the deck-house half an hour, sometimes imagining that the wind was freshening, sometimes that it was falling, sometimes watching with suspended breath the inky outline of a sea towering higher than the rest, and rendered visible by the foam of the breaking waters around it; and then starting as a surge, striking the vessel's quarter, would run forward along the side of the brig in an ever-heightening column, until, before it reached the fore-rigging, it would arch its dark form under the pressure of the wind, and coil like a

cataract of ink on to the deck, and come rushing and creaming and seething aft, floating the planks which yet remained, and launching them against the bulwarks of the front of the deck-house like small battering-rams in the hands of a giant, while overhead the swelling canvas, that appeared to be supported by masts whose base was the water itself, was howling and booming with the force of the wind, as it swept out of the spacious concavities and fled away under the foot of them, or poured out from the after-leech of the mizzen; when my eye was attracted by a shadow like a smirch upon the sky in the south-west.

“A sail!” I shouted to Johnson; and the glass being on the deck-house, I seized and levelled it.

The telescope, as I have said, was a very powerful one, and through it I could distinctly make out the outline of a large barque heading at an angle with our own course, steering about N.N.E. She was carrying a great press of sail; indeed, so far as I could make out, she had both her royals set, and as she was going free she swept like a cloud along the waters.

The green lantern was at our masthead, burning brightly ; but if she saw it, would she know that it was designed as a signal of distress ? At the rate at which she sailed she would be athwart our hawse, to windward and out of sight in twenty minutes. I sprang into the cabin and awakened the boatswain, exclaiming that there was a vessel in sight, and that we must at once devise some means of letting her know that we were in distress.

He was a true sailor and wide awake and on deck in a few moments. He saw the vessel before I could point her out ; she was on our lee quarter and leaning heavily over under the tower of canvas she carried, and was heading so as to cross our bows, though, had the brig possessed any speed in her heels, we should have made the barque pass under our stern.

The boatswain knew as well as I the extreme gravity of our peril in the event of more sea rising, and we both felt that the sighting of this barque was a chance that might not occur again for days and days ; and sighting her now, when we neither of

us knew but that in another hour the brig might be washing about, a helpless dismantled wreck, and offering us no better refuge than the deck-house, drove us both desperate.

“What shall we do to attract her?” I shouted. “Surely they can see that mast-head light.”

“Make a flare forrard, sir—make a flare forrard !” cried the boatswain. “Why, see how she’s passing away ! God help us—we might be anchored !”

Matthews, hearing our cries, came running out of the cabin. I told him to jump forward and help the boatswain to collect materials for a flare on the forecastle ; and he was off like a madman, understanding, without need of further words, that a sail was in sight. Whilst they were at work, I laid hold of the halliards to which the lantern was attached, and lowered and raised the light several times, all the while keeping my eyes intently fixed on the shadow of the barque that had now forged abeam of us, and whose outline was visible upon the sea just above the port bulwarks. She was drawing momentarily

nearer to us, as she came heading on a line converging with the direction in which the brig was going; and I felt as sure that they saw us as that we saw her, and that they could attach no other meaning to the motion I gave to the lantern than the one I intended.

The gloom was too great to enable me to see whether she shortened sail, but, in defiance of the hope that was making my heart beat furiously, I might judge that they were keeping all fast by the regularity of the speed at which she was passing us. Twice whilst I was working the lantern there poured such a flood of water inboard as swept my legs from under me, and I only narrowly escaped being hurled to leeward by clinging with all my strength to the running gear that was belayed at the foot of the mast.

Hearing the blows of a chopper, I shouted to the boatswain to know how he was getting on. He answered that he could not find any small stuff, and was obliged to split up a plank so as to get a start with his flare; "but everything's so bloody wet," he

bawled, "that I'm afeard we'll never get it to burn." I thought it a matter of life and death, and, belaying the halliards, rushed into the carpenter's berth and brought out an armful of canvas, along with a quantity of oakum that lay mixed up with the canvas in the locker under the bunk ; and ran to join the boatswain, splashing the water as high as my mouth as I floundered forward. But the decks were afloat fore and aft ; there was no dry place for a flare unless it was the top of the galley ; so I jumped on to it and put the canvas and oakum down, and keeping my foot upon it to prevent it flowing overboard, I sung out to the boatswain to hand me up such small stuff as he had collected, and then set fire to the oakum.

The tar blazed, the dry canvas caught, and in a few moments we should have had a great fire, when a sea struck the brig just abaft the fore-chains. A whole ocean of water ran up half as high as the foremast and plumped right down, extinguishing the fire, beating the breath out of my body and half drowning me, washing the boatswain round the galley, and driving Matthews

sputtering and choking as far as the deck-house, that brought him up.

Hardly knowing whether I was overboard or not, and it being pitch dark where I was, under the shadow of the main staysail, I called to the boatswain to hear what had become of him; and on his replying that he was not hurt, we scrambled aft and gained the top of the deck-house, where we found Matthews. I asked Johnson if all was well with him, and he replied, "Ay, ay; the water had come as high as his waist, but had done him no hurt."

Fortunately the wheel was elevated above the deck, and was protected from the seas breaking forward by the intervention of the deck-house. This was the heaviest sea the vessel had yet shipped. There was no possibility of making a flare unless we kindled one in the tops, where we stood to set fire to the rigging; and, utterly disheartened, half drowned, our teeth chattering in our heads, with the water streaming from us, we could do no more than hold on to the rail and watch the barque drawing ahead.

I had passed some hours of great mental suffering since I had boarded the brig, but nothing to equal the bitterness, the despair, the rage, that filled my heart in turns as I beheld the vessel speeding onwards from us. I knew, with every instinct of a sailor, that she had seen us ; that, even supposing (an unlikely supposition) there was no officer of the watch and no man on deck on the look-out at the time, the man at the wheel would have noticed the movements of the green light, and long ago have made out that we were a small vessel in distress, and given the alarm. She was passing us not above half a mile ahead, and one look through the glass would have enabled them to see that we were water-logged and in the utmost peril.

Yet she held on. She crossed our bows, and loomed up close to windward ; then her shadow lost its defined proportions ; she became a mere smudge against the sky, and in a quarter of an hour she was out of sight, swallowed up in the gloom.

“It can’t be helped, sir,” said the boat-swain, squeezing the water out of his eyes and wringing his hair.

I was too bitterly mortified and disappointed to speak. I thought of my darling in the cabin, and then that they had seen us and could have stood by and saved us had they liked; and, in my blind passion, I shook my fist at the vessel as she faded.

"Why, Mr. Lee, be yourself, sir!" cried the boatswain. "Pluck up your heart, and never mind them cowards. The lady below looks to you for her life, sir; and a man *must* be cool if he means to see his way out o' a mess of this kind."

I stood rebuked by a man who would have called himself my inferior. He was right, and I was wrong. "You have made me ashamed of my weakness," said I, "and I'll take care that your advice is not thrown away. What shall we do? Shall we keep the brig under canvas and risk her spars if the wheel be washed away, or shall we put her under bare poles, secure ourselves below, and let the breeze blow itself out?"

He reflected awhile, looking to windward, then said, "I'm for letting of her be, sir. She can't sink, even if her masts *do* go."

"No, but they may carry away the bul-

warks with them; and then think of the horrible muddle alongside—the spars grinding against her fit to break her up!”

“Still I’m for letting of her be, Mr. Lee,” he answered. “It may be my fancy, but the wind don’t seem so fresh as it was. What do you say, Bill?”

Wiping his streaming face down with the backs of his hands, Matthews turned his eyes towards the stern, and said, “There ain’t so much wind as there was.”

Indeed, this was evident to myself, though I judged the diminished force of the wind less by the *feel* of it than by the way the sails were drawing, and by the peculiar, lengthy fall and hollow sound of the water alongside. Moreover, albeit the inroads of the sea were still heavy, they were not so frequent. The water invariably broke over the brig forward, just abaft the fore-rigging, and rushed aft on either side the deck-house in a sputter and fury of froth as high as Johnson’s knees; but latterly not a drop had been shipped over the quarter.

I called to Johnson to know how she steered.

“Easy enough, so far as the wheel goes, sir; but it’s middling wet work standing down here,” he answered, cheerfully.

We remained waiting and watching. In half an hour’s time the certainty that the wind was falling rallied my spirits; moreover, the night had grown lighter and the stars were shining all around the horizon. I told Matthews to step below and bring up some rum, and we each of us swallowed a good dram, and handed a bumper to Johnson, who had been at the wheel since midnight, above three hours, during which time he had been standing in water as high as his knees, whilst occasionally the rush of the waves had floated him as high as his armpits. Matthews now relieved him, and I told Johnson to keep watch on the deck-house, whilst the boatswain and I overhauled the lockers below for some dry clothing. Although we none of us had much fear of salt-water whilst there was work to be done, yet soaking clothes clinging to the skin become mighty uncomfortable wear when a four hours’ watch has to be stood, or when one wants to lie down to get some sleep.

We took the lamp into the carpenter's berth, where we overhauled the chest of clothes, and found, in addition to the old pilot jacket, a sleeved waistcoat, two pairs of pilot cloth trousers, some flannel and stout cotton shirts, and some long, warm shank-hose, such as sailors wear under sea-boots. So here were clothes enough to give Johnson and Matthews a shift, and to contribute towards a wardrobe for the boatswain.

In the mate's chest we found more wearing apparel; two new Scotch caps, shirts, vests for the skin, some shoes, and other articles of dress, mixed up with a great quantity of papers, such as leaves from old log-books, parcels of invoices, and the like, as though a whole shelf of pigeon-holes had been emptied into the chest.

The boatswain and I then turned to and changed our streaming clothes, and the feel of the warm woollen shirts and the dry trousers was as comforting as twelve hours' sleep would have been. We rolled our wet clothes into bundles ready for drying when the sun rose, and then went on deck in our

bare feet with our breeches tucked above our knees, and I sent Matthews and Johnson below to shift themselves, I taking the wheel.

There was about as much wind now as there had been yesterday afternoon, and no more, a pleasant warm breeze and the sea settling down, so that only now and again a few bucketfuls of water flopped over the bulwarks forward. Yet, though danger for that time had passed, I could not recur to it without deep uneasiness; for if the brig was unable to meet a sea moderate enough to allow the barque that had passed us to carry royals, what would be our fate should a gale rise? how long would this hull, already strained by the seas she had encountered, filled with the dead weight of water and timber, without buoyancy, yield or elasticity, be able to contend with the waves should a long interval of bad weather set in?

It was, indeed, hard upon us that the wind should hang in the east when the only wind that could save us—and it was the wind we had the most right to expect

in these seas—must blow from the directly opposite quarter.

When the men, having changed their clothes, came on deck again, I hove the log and made the speed between three and a half and three and three-quarter knots, with the same number of points leeway I had before found. I put this down in pencil, and then told the boatswain and Matthews to go and turn in until five o'clock; for as they had been up during the greater part of their watch below, they would have had but little rest had they relieved me at four o'clock. They were very thankful for the chance, for, to be sure, we had all of us passed through a most exhausting time; though my own weariness was not like that which makes a man crave for sleep, but a sensation of hollowness in the chest, a langour in all the limbs, a dimness of the sight, such as one feels after sitting through a night by the bedside of a dying mother or wife, or such, indeed, as attends great mental conflict and cruel, wearisome trial.

In spite of the floods of water which the brig had shipped, the deck-house was as dry

as an old bone, which went far to increase my admiration of the manner in which the vessel was built. I turned in at five o'clock, and was awakened at seven by the sunshine streaming on my face through the little cabin window. When I had laid down it was dark, and before I fell asleep my mind was full of the water sweeping over the wreck, the horrible anxiety I had endured, the shadow of the barque passing away ahead and dissolving upon the gloom; and now the first thing I saw when I opened my eyes was this glorious beam of sunshine.

It is impossible to express the feeling of gladness it brought, the wonderfully cheering influence of it as I lay a few moments watching the little window that it had transformed into a pane of transparent gold. Here was come another day, and a fine one, and as I sprang out of my bunk, caring to lie no longer, my heart put up a prayer to God that before another night shadowed the deep we might be safe.

I stood at the cabin door looking along the deck. The galley fire was lighted, as I could tell by the smoke blowing away from

the chimney; the decks were quite dry and barred by the shadows of the rigging; and there, close against the galley, was Nelly, helping Matthews to hang up our wet clothes. She had tied a handkerchief over her head and had tucked up her dress, and never did her lovely figure show to such perfection as now, while she stood with her back to me with her arms raised, attaching the clothes to a line by means of rope-yarns, whilst Matthews hoisted away as fast as she slung the things. The sailor saw me and spoke to her; she instantly looked around and ran up to me.

I drew her into the cabin and greeted her after the fashion that pleased us both, and then she said that she had been on deck since six o'clock, that she had helped Matthews to light the galley fire, and that she was going to get breakfast for us; but first she wanted to finish hanging up those things, and would I come forward and talk to her whilst she worked? and she was pulling me by the hand, when she stopped, and, looking up and down my figure, burst into a laugh. My eye followed hers, and

then I laughed too. The truth was, in the hurry of changing our clothes, the boatswain and I had seized the first that came to hand out of the mate's chest, and there being but a feeble light in consequence of the lamp not having been trimmed since the previous evening, I had noticed neither the fit nor the colour of what I had put on.

I had turned in all standing, and now that I was up I perceived that I had habited myself in a green satin waistcoat that I had imagined to be black camlet, a red shirt, and a pair of black cloth trousers big enough to have held a couple of aldermen. This, with a cutaway coat, the sleeves of which I had been obliged to turn up, adorned with large, smooth brass buttons, and so voluminous in the back that it hung in as many folds from my shoulders as a spanker half-brailed up from a gaff, completed my toilet, not forgetting that my legs as high as my knees were as bare as a baby's. Had I blacked my face and mounted the mate's straw hat, I should have passed very well for a street-nigger.

“Why, good gracious me!” said I,

laughing consumedly, as I revolved like a top in my efforts to obtain a view of my hinder parts, "the mate of this brig must have been a giant. As I live, a pea-green satin waistcoat! And see these buttons! Crikey, here is a rig for a sailor! Could these have been Mr. Sidewell's preparations for a South American fandango? Oh, pray excuse me, Nelly; I can't really exhibit myself to the boatswain and the others in this rig."

And I dived into my berth, where, after overhauling the chest, I found a black velvet waistcoat, which I substituted for the green satin one; but though there were other trousers, they were all as big as the ones I had on, and I could not find another coat; so, meaning later on to search the captain's lockers for more suitable garments, I went on deck, a little less brilliantly clad, but looking like a man swollen with gout. The boatswain, who was a large man, filled out his clothes very fairly, and the grin we exchanged, therefore, was a rather one-sided one.

He was at the wheel, and I went to see

how the brig was heading. If the wind had been controlled by the weather-cock that Tom Sheridan fixed at east in his school-master's garden to prevent the old doctor from venturing out, it could not have been more steady. It had not veered by so much as a quarter of a point since it had come on to blow, and here was the brig still swarming along at about three knots an hour, with the wind very nearly over her stern, the sea smooth, with the morning sunlight trembling in it as though every little wave were of frosted silver, a clear blue sky with here and there a wool-white cloud overhead, and not an object in sight.

We could have set more canvas had we chosen—a couple of studding-sails and the main royal; but when the boatswain asked me if I thought of making more sail, I answered, “As we are heading now, I do not see of what use more canvas will be to us; we ought not to fix our thoughts upon the South Sea Islands so long as the American coast lies nearer to us; we do not want to go west, we want to go east, and my only reason in letting the brig drive forward at

all is because we are making a little north-
ing, and the higher we advance the greater
is our chance of meeting ships."

"You're quite right, Mr. Lee; there
would be no use in running west if we wasn't
going north too," he replied. "But I wish
I could see a way to make this brig more
weatherly. I've been turning all sorts of
notions over in my mind, sir; sometimes
I'd think, how would it answer if we was to
fence the bulwarks with these here planks
—give 'em a rise of two or three foot?
But Lord, sir, it 'ud be of no use. The first
sea would knock the very best job we could
turn out into smithereens."

"There's nothing to be done in that way,
bo'sun. I've thought over a good many
things myself; but I've come to this con-
clusion, that there is no other look-out for
us than to keep the brig sailing as far
north as we can edge her, and to pray for
smooth water and that a sail may heave in
sight soon."

"I'm afraid that's about it, Mr. Lee,"
answered Sinnet, with something like a
groan.

I went forward to give Nelly a hand if she wanted it, but by this time the clothes were all slung, and Matthews was tricing them up, and the shirts and trousers fluttering in the wind made the brig look like a laundry-woman's yard. And yet the homely sight seemed to civilize our condition, too; there was a suggestion of life and safety in those fluttering garments and the smoke of the galley fire.

"Why, Nelly, you are going to work in earnest," said I. "Mind you do not tire yourself."

"Don't be afraid; if you knew how much more contented it makes me feel to have something to do, you would keep me employed all day long. Besides," said she, looking at me earnestly, "I have a right to claim a share in the work on board. You would not, surely, have me sit still and look on whilst you were working, when I could be of use. If it should please God to preserve us, why should not I be able to have my boast as well as you, dear? I can pull a rope, I can steer, I can light a fire, I can use a telescope, and have as good eyes for a distant ship as any of you."

“My darling, you shall please yourself. But as to your having a boast, are you not satisfied with already having saved three lives by your courage and example to the men who were adrift with you in the boat? If you had not put the idea of searching for this brig into their minds, and urged them to persevere in hunting for her, you would all have perished, and I should have remained alone, and in all human likelihood perished too.”

“It is your love that makes you talk like that,” said she, blushing and laughing. “My behaviour in the boat counts for nothing. I want to be of use here, to do my share of the work, and you must find me employment, Will, or I shall be hunting after work for myself and making blunders.”

“Well, I promise,” I answered. “And after breakfast I will set you to carry out a really important job. Now tell me what sort of a night you passed.”

“I should have come on deck if I had not been afraid of my terrible sweetheart,” she said, looking at me out of the corner of her eyes, while the sun made a whole spark-

ling tumble of the surface of her golden-brown hair, and her white throat contrasted like the breast of a sea-gull against the collar of her dress, and her hands, locked upon her breast, on the finger of one of which sparkled the ring I had given her, looked like carvings in white ivory, and every yield of her figure to the languid roll of the deck lent graceful undulations to her superb outlines ; and then changing her voice, and fixing her eyes on me with intense affectionate anxiety in the expression of them, she exclaimed, " Oh, Will, I know that you have passed a dreadful night. I see it on my boy's face. I lay a long while listening to the roaring of the water as it rushed past the cabin, and every moment expected you to come to me and say the brig was going to pieces. I heard you calling the boatswain and telling him to 'make a flare'—those were the words, I think ; and I knew that a ship was in sight. Yet I never stirred, though I would have given anything to have been on deck. Tell me, now, if I am not obedient and to be trusted."

I was deeply moved to hear that she had

been awake during the night, and had heard what had passed on deck ; for I very well knew how the imagination, fed by our shouts, and the dashing of the water alongside the deck-house, as it burst in thunder over the brig, would serve the bravest man or woman lying alone in a little berth in darkness, and capable only of judging the character of the peril by the terrifying noises which reached the ear ; and I cannot conceive any act of heroism on her part that would have paralleled in my admiration the fortitude exhibited by her under conditions which, I say, would have wrought up the imagination of the bravest man into an agony of expectation and suspense. I thought of the boatswain's description of Madame Espinosa rushing on deck when the *Waldershare* struck, and shrieking out ; I recalled the description given by eye-witnesses of the yelling and confusion among men and women in times of danger at sea ; and my heart was fired with admiration and love when I reflected on the long, dreadful hours which had been passed in solitude, and calmly, by Nelly in the night just gone.

She went into the galley to look after the breakfast, and though I did not like to see her in that grimy place, I could not choose but let her have her own way. I took the tour of the brig forward, to note how the gear we had set up yesterday had stood the wear of the night, and finding the stays slack, I called Matthews, and we clapped the jigger on to them; otherwise everything was taut and strong.

I then went out on the bowsprit to have a look at the brig's bows, thinking it not impossible but that she might have taken water in through one of her bow ports; but she was too deep, and the water too thick, for me to see anything. From this point of view I could better realize the perilous character of the set of the hull in the water, than by looking at her aft or from aloft. Her decks were as nearly as possible flush with the sea; her bulwarks stood up just like the sides of a flat-bottomed box afloat. It was impossible to look at her without shuddering and feeling a kind of recoil, for she gave one the impression of being in the act of settling down, and every heave

seemed the last she would take before her stern disappeared. As I viewed her thus I was astonished that more water had not come aboard last night. The sea was so close, and the hull so sluggish, that a very small height of wave, one might imagine, would fall over the rail as over the edge of a floating saucer. It was certain she had more buoyancy in her than I imagined.

At eight o'clock we got breakfast, Johnson turning out to relieve the boatswain at the wheel. Matthews brought the tea aft, and some little cakes made by Nelly, which we ate with salt butter, and very heartily enjoyed. I now gave my sweetheart the key of the store-room, and explained the nature of the important job I wished her to undertake. It was this: that she should make out a list of the stores and spirits, and also calculate the quantity of fresh water in the scuttle-butts, and reckon how long they would last the five of us at so much each per diem, and to serve out that quantity every morning whilst we remained on the wreck.

This was indeed an important matter,

and the moment we had done breakfast she went to work. I took the opportunity of her being out of her berth to overhaul the captain's lockers for a suit of clothes that would fit me better than those I had on; and found a complete suit of grey tweed, that fitted me as if the tailor had worked to my measure. I felt easier in these clothes, not only because they fitted me well, but because they were of light material, and sat without weight, whereas in the mate's togs I felt wrapt up in a blanket. At the same time I collected the money out of the mate's chest, and made it into a parcel along with the money in the captain's berth. I also made a parcel of the other miscellaneous articles, and put them aside in a convenient place, ready to take with me should we leave the brig.

After I had done this I found Nelly puzzled to find out the exact quantity of water in the scuttle-butts. This bothered me too; and when she proposed to measure it by pouring it into a tub, by means of the soda-water bottle, I believed there was no other way; though I did not like the notion

either, as I feared some might be wasted in the emptying, and though there was a good drop left, there was not so great a plenty as to justify me in hazarding as much as a gill of it.

At last I thought we might get at it pretty accurately by first gauging the depth of the water in each cask, and afterwards finding the number of cubic inches in as much of the casks as the water filled; and then, by ascertaining how many inches a half-pint contained, we should be able to learn how many gallons of water there were in the scuttle-butts. This calculation took me some time, not being a very bright hand at figures of this kind; though in navigation calculations I would call few men my masters; and at last I made out that there were very nearly seventy-two gallons of water in the two casks, and Nelly then went to work to discover how long this quantity would last five persons, by putting them on an allowance of a pint and a half each per day.

To guard against any risk of a sea washing these casks away from their lashings, I

filled a number of empty lime-juice and spirit jars with water, and stowed them away in the store-room; and as this and other jobs had brought the hour to ten o'clock, I left Nelly to finish her list of stores, in order to relieve Johnson at the wheel.

But first I thought I would go aloft and have a look around. It was a clear, brilliant morning, and I knew it would be possible to see a great distance, by the wonderful purity of the line of the horizon, that lay ruled against the sky as sharply as ever you have seen the summit of a dark coast hove up in the keen atmosphere of an English winter day.

I had, of course, but one hope, and that was to sight a ship; and I made up my mind as I went aloft, with the telescope slung at my back, that should we have the luck to make out another sail, we should all of us immediately go to work to raise the densest smoke we could get out of the planks still remaining, and damp canvas, and pieces of junk, and all the other lumber we could collect; nay, I determined that

after dinner that day we should build up and shelter a quantity of wood, ready for firing at a moment's notice ; for though I felt a bitter hatred against the barque that had passed and deserted us in the darkness, yet I would think they might not have noticed the green light either, and that could we have made a flare they would have hove to to see what it was.

Having gained the royal-yard, that was the highest point of elevation I could attain, I set my back against the mast, and levelled the glass at the sea that was over the jibboom of the brig, and very carefully swept the horizon away on the left-hand side until I had observed every inch of it as far as the point lying directly over the stern, and then crossed to the other side of the yard, and beginning again with the glass, I had worked as far as three points on the port bow, when I observed a most delicate blue filmy shadow—no bigger, indeed, than a pea—down in that quarter, suspended over the water, with a white, quivering space between it and the horizon.

I looked at it intently, believing it to be a cloud, and kept on watching it to observe whether it rose or sank ; and then, finding it remain stationary, my heart began to beat fast and my cheeks burn, though still I could not tell if it was a ship or no. And yet, if it were a ship, I could not imagine why it was that colour, as the sun, that was directly behind me, was shining full upon upon it, and would certainly throw up the white canvas.

I put down my glass for some minutes to see if the tiny shadow would be there when I looked again ; but, on looking, there it was, sure enough, and if it were not land, then I knew not what it could be, for it was like the point of a hill or mountain peering above the sea line and dislocated by the refraction, so as to appear detached and hanging clear of the water, with a white space of swimming, quivering lustre between it and the sea.

I would not leave the yard yet, however, nor allow that what I had seen would remain in sight. Although I might be out of my reckonings twenty miles, yet I

was sure I could not be further astray than that, and for hundreds of miles to the north and west the chart showed no land. But on looking again and finding the shadow still there, I threw the glass over my shoulder and came down the rigging with a queer trembling in my body, and went into the deck-house.

Nelly was at the table occupied with her calculations, and so busy that she merely glanced up at me with a smile as I passed into the berth where the boatswain lay sleeping. I opened the chart and looked at it; but, as I knew, no land was marked down nearer than Mas-a-fuera and Juan Fernandez to the N.E., and the islands lying on the parallels of 25° and 26° S., bearing from the brig N. and N.W.

I put my hand on the boatswain's shoulder, and he instantly opened his eyes.

"There is a shadow upon the horizon about three points on the port bow," said I in a low voice, not wishing Nelly to hear me, "and it looks like land."

He immediately tumbled out of his hammock on to the deck.

"Land!" he exclaimed, opening his eyes wide, whilst they gleamed as if they reflected a light behind me.

"Hush!" said I, putting my finger on my mouth. "For fear that I may be deceived, say nothing about it yet. Jump aloft with this glass to the royal-yard and give me your report."

He threw the glass over his shoulders and ran on to the deck. I walked up to Nelly and looked at what she was writing. She had ruled a sheet of paper, and against the list of provisions was entering the quantity and how long they would last at so much a day. She was, indeed, compiling the table admirably, and she looked up at me with a glad smile when I praised her work. To see her sitting and working with her cheek in her hand, whilst the sunshine streaming through the skylight flooded the table with light, made it hard for me to realize that we were aboard a water-logged vessel, shipwrecked, and not knowing what might be our fate from hour to hour.

I pressed my lips to her forehead, and went on to the top of the deck-house.

Johnson suspected that something was in sight, and was looking, as he stood at the wheel, very eagerly at the boatswain, who had gained the royal-yard and was working away with the glass.

That the object I had seen was still in sight, I was sure by the way in which Sinnet kept the telescope pointing in one direction. At last he took his eye from the glass, and swinging up his arm, shouted in a burst of uncontrollable excitement—

“Land ho!”

“Land ho!” yelled Johnson, letting go the wheel and springing a yard high in the air.

“Are you sure it’s land?” I bawled.

“Ay,” answered the boatswain; “as sure as yonder sky’s blue.”

“Hurrah!” I cried, giving way to the transport of delight that seized me. “Land ho! Nelly, land ho!” I shouted, putting my head down the skylight. “Come on deck, my darling; there’s land in sight!”

She came running up on deck immediately, and I indicated the direction in which the land lay, and told her that

it was visible from the masthead. She very well knew I was not deceived, and grew very pale as she stood looking across the sea, breathing quickly and her eyes gleaming.

Matthews now came tumbling out of the cabin, having been aroused by my shouts down the skylight.

"What, is there land in sight?" he called to Johnson.

"Ay, Billy, your last voyage isn't taken yet, my man!" replied Johnson; whereat Matthews uttered a loud hurrah, and springing into the main-rigging, went bounding aloft to view the land for himself.

"Hand him the glass, bo'sun," I sung out, "and let us see what he makes of it."

The fellow had no sooner levelled the glass than he bawls out, "It's right enough! that's land!" So here were three of us all agreed, and I had now no doubt whatever. On this I told Matthews to loose the main-royal, as he was up there; and whilst Nelly stood at the wheel, Johnson and I set the sail. The two men then rigged out the main-topmast studding-sail booms.

The sails were up and down the lower rigging, and in a few minutes we sent them up. This canvas tolerably well covered the little brig, and on heaving the log I found she was making a trifle over four knots.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNCHARTED ROCK.

HAD it been possible to set any more canvas that would have been of use to the brig with the wind aft—for in order to fill the studding-sails I had let her go off a couple of points, so as to keep the spot of land about one point on the lee bow—we should have piled it on her, for it behoved us to force her through it as fast as ever she could sail, lest the wind should fall light and shift, in which case, as the brig would only sail with the wind nearly aft, we should never be able to make the land.

So fate contrived that this very east wind that I had cursed again and again should become the most precious of any wind that could blow, and its failure now would be an infinitely heavier misfortune

than its first coming on had seemed to me to be.

I told Matthews to remain aloft with the glass, and to con the vessel from the top-gallant yard, taking care to keep the land at least one point on the port bow, and to descend as the land rose. I then went below and overhauled all the charts on the shelves, but could only find one referring to these seas, and, as I have said, it showed no land to be near us for leagues and leagues.

I brought it on the deck-house, and pointing out the spot where the brig was, as nearly as I could guess, I let the boatswain see that for a wide space to the north, east, and west it was all blank. He asked me if I thought it likely there had been an error in the observation taken on board the *Waldershare*. I said no ; Mr. Thomas's and my workings had tallied exactly. We then measured the log-line, wondering if the brig had sailed faster than the log had shown, but the measurement between the knots corresponded accurately with the twenty-eight-second glass. Had we drifted to the northward with a strong tide ? he wanted to

know. I replied that, had we drifted on a tide running ten knots an hour, we could not have made any land in that time.

“Any way,” said he, “whatever land it may be, it *is* land. It’s not a ship; it be’nt a cloud. So land it is, whether it’s marked down or not, and that’s all that we need care about.”

As much to satisfy Nelly (who, not being able to see the land from the deck, was looking at me as she listened to my conversation with the boatswain, with a great deal of anxiety) as to reassure myself, I went aloft again, as high as the cross-trees, where, without the glass, the delicate blue shadow was visible, looking the size of a man’s thumb-nail, and floating like a puff of smoke from a cannon on the horizon, towards which the water was running in slender oily lines.

“Why,” said I to Matthews, who was perched on the yard over my head, “I can see it here. We’re rising it fairly well. Bring the glass down.

I again examined it through the telescope, but the glass merely defined the outline and

magnified the dimensions of it ; but for its being stationary, and rising slowly, it might have passed for a cloud.

“There can be no question as to its being land,” said I to Nelly, on regaining the deck. “Pray God this wind hold for a few hours longer !”

“Oh, Will !” she exclaimed, clasping her hands, “it seems scarcely possible ; and yet *you* could not be deceived.” A gay, hopeful smile flashed out over her face, and she cried, “We may be spared to see Phœbe and Mr. Johnson and Burmarsh after all, Will ; and oh ! what a voyage this will be to talk over !”

Not knowing where we were or what land that was, it was impossible to guess the distance it lay from us. All that I could feel sure was that it was an island. But it might be an island of mountains ; and if that blue shadow were the peak of a mountain, then, in such transparent air as this, with a bright sun shining overhead, the land might be fifty miles off ; whereas, if it were a low, small island, it need not be more than twelve or fifteen miles distant.

No one who has not been in such a position as I am attempting to describe can understand the consuming anxiety that seized us all. Yearning as we were for land, even had we been aboard a vessel that would sail, our fear lest the wind should shift and delay our progress would have been terribly great; but here was a vessel that would only sail before the wind. If the wind changed we should be driven out of sight of the land, and having no means of ascertaining our latitude and longitude, the odds against our being able to sight that land again would be as heavy as a thousand to one; nay, I may say, we should have no chance at all.

Besides, the sight of land had kindled a hundred emotions in us. We were, so to speak, used to our perilous position; we went about our work mechanically; we could only trust that all would be well with us in the end; but that was not like feeling that safety was within our reach. But now, land being in sight quickened every instinct of life, filled us with passionate eagerness to come at it, gave a new edge to the horrors

of our situation, and mingled with our burning hopes a heart-breaking fear that disappointment lay in wait for us.

For some time I gave way to my feelings, and my excitement was even greater than the others'; but reflecting that they looked up to me, that my being in command made it an obligation on me to meet this new unfolding of fate coolly and to school my mind for the endurance of whatever might befall, if not for the men, then at least for her who was dearer to me than my heart's blood, I pulled myself together, and after a short struggle regained my composure.

"There is no reason," said I, "because land is in sight, that we should starve. Boatswain, jump forward and see how the galley fire burns. Here it is a quarter-past eleven, and no meat in the copper. All the watching in the world won't freshen the breeze, nor keep it east, if it has a fancy to veer. How does the land look up there, Matthews?"

"Steady as a church, sir, and growing white," he answered from the cross-trees.

"Why, then, if that be so, we're nearer

to it than I imagind," I exclaimed, with my pulse beating afresh.

In order to lessen by distraction the wearing suspense of the time to Nelly, I suggested that she should go forwards and look to our dinner ; and, hailing Matthews, I ordered him to lay down, and I also called the boat-swain aft.

"I want to tell you all," said I, "that I have not the least idea what that land is ; but as it *is* land, we should see all clear for bringing up ; for it's fifty to one if we shall find any human creature on it, more especially seeing that it's not laid down in this chart ; and so we must expect no help, and stand by to be our own pilots. We must get the anchors over the bows, and the sooner we turn to the better."

The three of us accordingly went forward, leaving Johnson at the wheel, to whom I gave strict orders to keep the vessel to the exact course she was then steering—not to swerve a hair's-breadth to leeward of that course ; for, even as it was, I was not keeping to windward of the land as I should have done had I not been anxious to keep

both studding-sails drawing, and to let her go almost dead before it, in order to save all leeway. It was the deuce's own job to get the anchor over. It took us an hour to get the starboard anchor ready for use, and by that time the land was just peeping over the horizon under the foot of the jib.

I called Nelly and pointed out the land to her, saying there it was, and she could judge for herself whether it was land or not. She was too overcome to speak. She stood looking at it with a rapt expression in her eyes, and her lips apart and her bosom heaving and falling quickly. I knelt down, the better to steady the glass, and could clearly perceive some of the lineaments of the island; on the left hand the summit of a rock, a ravine or opening of a bay in the centre, and again, on the right, a short, low coast, like the side of a crater, with a forefoot that tended to the westward. It was clearly an island, and a very small one, too, the front of it, as we looked, not more than one-third of a mile in extent. We had not yet risen the base of it, at least from the deck; but it was easily seen, by

aid of the glass, that the highest point was not much higher than our main-topsail yard, and therefore we might know, having regard to what navigators call the "dip," or height of our deck above the sea, it could not be much further than twelve miles distant, and I had therefore sighted it from the royal-yard when it was about eighteen miles away.

There was still a little breeze of wind, but the heat of the sun was great, and seemed to be drying it up. The mainsail had been hauled up to let the foresail draw ; but that sail was scarcely lifting now, and the studding sails flapped to every movement of the brig.

The idea of a calm worried me terribly. I dreaded, above all things, that a shift of wind would succeed it ; and it was also impossible to know what currents we might have hereabouts, and how they might set the brig if no wind-power was to be had to carry her straight. Yet, until the breeze actually failed, I could not complain. Every waft of air sneaked us forward somewhat, and, light as the wind was, the

bubbles were going astern, and this hull, sunk into the sea down to within a few inches of her scuppers, was mysteriously pushing forwards at not less than two miles an hour.

We were too anxious to eat our dinner below; there was not one of us but had a superstitious reluctance to lose sight of that island for longer than a few minutes at a time. Its springing up under our bows in the middle of this great ocean, where I had thought there was no land within four or five hundred miles of us, was so like a dream that we durst not let it go, as it were, with our eyes lest when we looked again it should be gone indeed.

So Johnson—Matthews being at the helm—brought the dinner on to the deck-house. A chair was fetched for Nelly, and she ate from her plate in her lap. The sun poured down fiercely upon us, but we were so absorbed in our thoughts and in talk about the island that, had the sun been as hot again, we should not have noticed it.

Of all the hours I had passed since I had been aboard the brig few had been more

trying, more brimful of breathless suspense, and of the pain of eager expectation delayed, than these. The sea was almost perfectly smooth, but not glassy, scarred with the lingering wind, and of a deep blue, reflecting an azure heaven that was unstained by the lightest fleck of cloud. I looked, time after time, over the vessel's side into the blue water, transparent as tinted glass, and saw the bubbles still floating past, and knew therefore that we were steadily, however slowly, approaching the island; for by this hour—three o'clock—it lay all compact upon the sea, and through the glass I beheld the silver line of breakers at the edge of the long thin slope of beach that swept like an arm athwart the central gulley, and the stone-coloured sides of the rocks on either hand, and the interior of the island lying in small ridges, the lower parts in shadow and the tops of them shining in the sun.

Yet our tedious, slow pace fired me with such impatience that sometimes I scarcely had power to contain myself, and the sight of the burnished horizon, on which, down

in the south, the sunlight lay in a steady coil of dazzling light, would make me stamp my foot and pace the deck like a madman.

At four o'clock the land was about five miles distant; but by this time the air had utterly died out. Our canvas hung in motionless folds, the sea stretched away like a surface of pale-blue satin, and so calm was the water that the island lay mirrored in it, every line unbroken, and the colours without a blurr.

"There is no help for it, bo'sun," I exclaimed; "we must tow her. We can't let her drift; and should the wind come ahead, that island would fade away from us as if it were smoke."

"Very well, sir. Bob, jump forward and pay a line over the bows well in under the bowsprit. Bill, lend us a hand to lower this quarter-boat. We'd better take the brig's boat, Mr. Lee; she won't pull half so heavy as the *Waldershare's*."

"Ay, lower the starboard boat," I answered; "but put the other boat's oars into her. We shall want four oars."

I then told Nelly (who had seized the

wheel the moment the boatswain had called the man from it) that we were going to take the brig in tow, and try if we couldn't fetch the island in that way, and that she must keep the vessel's bowsprit aiming straight at the land.

The boat was now alongside ; we all four tumbled into her, and in a minute we were ahead of the brig with our tow-rope taut, and our oars *cheeping* bravely as they ground against the thole-pins.

Now that we were ahead and away by some thirty feet from the brig, we were all greatly struck to notice how terribly deep she lay. The water was extraordinarily transparent and pure, and we could see her coppered forefoot quivering far down with a greenish sheen, like a bay-leaf with the sun upon it. We could almost make out enough of her rim to observe that her lines were wonderfully fine, whilst her bow was that of a clipper, her stem as sharp as a knife, curving outwards with a graceful sweep as far as the figure-head, that consisted of a small silver ball poised on a little shelf, intended, I suppose, to represent the morning-star.

The boatswain, who pulled stroke (being our strongest man), launched forth in her praise, exclaiming that it was a cruel shame to turn such a hull into a timber vessel; that it was like slicing the nose off a man's face to cut ports in such bows as hers; and that, judging by her tops and bulwarks, and the breadth and thickness of her yards, and the spread of her shrouds, he would not mind wagering she had been built by the French for their navy.

This had been my notion too, but I was too anxious to observe what way we made to criticize the vessel we towed. It was hot and hard work rowing the boat under such a sun as that which looked down upon us, and against such a dead weight as the water-logged brig. But we made her follow us; we wrinkled the water around her bows; the warp sang out as we tautened the bight of it, and then it would jerk the boat back, and fall slack, to be hauled taut again by another steady sweep of the oars.

Every man of us knew that it was as good as a matter of life or death to fetch the island before any shift of wind came,

and this consideration nerved us into downright steady work, rising the muscles into lumps as big as eggs on our arms, whilst we rowed with our teeth set and the perspiration pouring from our bodies like water.

We held on in this way for about an hour, with not more than three short spells of rest between; and by this time—five o'clock—the island was not above three and a half miles distant, though so brilliant was the atmosphere and so sharply defined every line and scar of the rocks, that it did not appear a stone's-throw away.

“I'm done! I'm spent!” I exclaimed, panting heavily, and running the handle of the oar under my knee, whilst with my fingers I combed the sweat off my face and sent a whole shower of it flying overboard. “I must rest a spell, or I shall drop like an overdriven horse.”

“Is that dark line astern o' the brig wind, do you think, Mr. Lee?” asked the boatswain, standing up in the boat.

I got on to the thwart with my hand on the boatswain's shoulder, and after looking a few moments, sung out gladly, “Ay, it's a

breeze coming right down astern—a whole capful, by Heaven! Hurrah, boys! there's enough there to run the island down with."

We cast the warp adrift, and in a few minutes we were on the deck of the brig, with the boat hanging at the davits. The breeze coming up astern was as fresh as a squall, yet there was not a cloud to be seen. The water was a black-blue, laced with silver froth and small jagged waves, as though a strong tide was racing over shallows; the form of the wind was marked upon the sea in a perfect semicircle, a sight I never saw before, the horns of which were abeam of the ship on both horizons when the centre was fully two miles astern of us. The contrast of the pale-blue, lustrous surface of the oil-smooth sea, with the rough, dark line of water where the wind was coming, was exceedingly fine and curious.

In a few minutes our sails were full, the studding-sails swelling out as a boy rounds his cheeks to whistle, and the half-sunk hull was swirling through the water again four times as fast as we could have towed

her. I stationed the boatswain at the wheel and went forward half-way out upon the bowsprit to con her. When the island lay not above a mile ahead, I told Johnson and Matthews to get the studding-sails in, and meanwhile I kept a sharp lookout for rocks ahead.

By this time it could be seen that the land was a small coral island, no more than a rock, the highest point of which was not above thirty feet from the water. It was, so far as I could discern, almost circular, with a beetling edge on the starboard side, that came along in a hilly sweep down into the sea, going into the water like a beach, and forming a tolerably wide creek, that was bounded on the western side by a great rugged lump of whitish rock, between fifteen and twenty feet high. I had never been shipmates with an island of this kind before, which was just fit to make a pretty ornament for a gentleman's lake, looking more like the top of a mountain or some volcanic creation hove up above the surface of the water, without an atom of vegetation anywhere, and of the colour of a meerschaum

pipe that has been smoked a few times ; but I had heard that alongside most of these coral deposits you could get no soundings.

However, I kept a bright look-out for rocks and shoals, being desperately anxious to anchor the brig without injury to her bottom. I told Johnson and Matthews to stand by to bring up, and called to the boatswain to shift his helm smartly when I sung out. I then ported the helm in order to give the tongue of land on the starboard side a sheer, but as I was pretty sure the brig would not round the point in time to save her from plumping into the big rock on the other side of the creek, we hauled up the foresail and the men stood by to let go the fore-topsail, jib, and staysail halliards.

As we went by the tongue of beach, I noticed that the creek or estuary ran, for about a quarter of a mile, straight into the heart of the island, and then branched with a slight deviation to the left. The creek now lay broad on our starboard beam, the tongue of beach was abreast of our quarter, and directly facing the vessel's head was the rugged face of the great rock.

“Hard a-port!” I shouted, and at the same moment down came the head-sails. I sprang aft with Johnson to flatten in the spanker sheet, and Matthews let go the port main-braces, and the sails being full the yards swung of themselves. This manœuvre brought the whole pressure of the canvas aft, and the brig’s head slowly came round; but not an instant too soon, for the end of the jibboom was so close against the rock opposite that I expected to hear it grate and see it snap off like a carrot.

We were now under the lee of the right-hand stretch of shore; all aloft the wind was fresh enough, and whistling through the rigging, but on deck it was perfectly calm. Neither the boatswain nor I thought it advisable to bring up here, as the brig would be exposed to any sea that might roll up from the south-west; so there was nothing for it but to let go and clew up, get the boat overboard, and tow the brig as high up the creek as we might think it proper to carry her.

I have described this creek—and it is

convenient that I should continue to call it a creek—as extending about a quarter of a mile before it deviated to the left; its breadth at the entrance was about sixty fathoms, but it grew narrower as it advanced, until, at the bend, the two shores were not more than eighty feet apart. It was extremely strange to look from side to side and see nothing but coral rock, with not a blade of grass, no tint of green, scarcely a shadow, indeed. One would have thought a great storm had snapped off a little piece of main headland, and blown it far out into the Pacific.

We lowered the boat, and leaving Nelly at the wheel, the four of us took the brig in tow again. I had the bow oar, so that I might pause now and again to look over and see what bottom we were making. There could be no doubt there was a tide here by the appearance of the beach and side of the rocks, which had a worn and bleached look, like a line of marble inlaid upon the coral, for about five inches above the existing level of the water; and, indeed, I could not help thinking there was a little tide running up with us now, for we appeared to be moving

somewhat faster than I believed we could tow the brig; however, I thought I might be mistaken.

In about a quarter of an hour we had reached the bend of the creek, and saw that it extended another forty or fifty fathoms, meeting an inclined shelf of rock, the colour of which at the base deceived me into believing it to be sand. This incline, which was a gradual slope, and very rugged after it had ascended half a dozen yards, terminated in the highest point of the coral deposit. The breadth of the creek here was between thirty and forty feet, and the form of it at the extremity was a perfect oval.

Having reached this bend, I called to Nelly to put the wheel over to starboard, motioning with my hand to intimate the direction in which she should turn the spokes, and by rowing very hard at the same time we sufficiently canted the brig's head to enable the jibboom to clear the starboard rocks.

"Why, look over the side, bo'sun," I exclaimed, "what think you of that bottom? Is it reef, or sand, or what?"

"You'll get no sand here, sir," said Matthews, who had cruised among the South Sea Islands, and knew something of their coral formation.

Whatever the bottom was, there it lay, clear as silver, and looking, indeed, like silver, in the exquisitely transparent green sea-water. But whether it was one or ten fathoms deep no one could say. .

"Anyhow, it looks level," remarked the boatswain. "I don't see no signs of rocks; do you, Bill?"

Matthews replied that it appeared to him to be as flat as a deck; and, indeed, our eyes could not deceive us as to the formation of this bottom, for any asperities would have been visible.

"If it's as hard as it looks, Mr. Lee," said the boatswain, "there'll be no use in letting go the anchor. A harpoon 'ud snap against it. The best plan will be to moor the vessel; and if you'll just look yonder, sir, you'll see a ledge of rock that would hold a warp as well as an eye-bolt."

"Ay, and there's just such another rock abreast it," I exclaimed, pointing to the

opposite side of the creek. "They'll hold us well enough for the present; so give way, my lads, and let's get the hooker alongside them."

We rowed smartly for ten minutes. I had my eye on the brig, noticing that she had grown monstrous heavy on our hands, when Robert Johnson sung out, "I'm dashed if we're moving, mates!"

"Why, we're aground!" bawled Matthews.

I flung up my oar, and looked over. The boat was not aground, but there could be no question that the brig was; for the creek had shoaled so suddenly and greatly that the boatswain, harpooning the water with his oar, struck bottom, when at least a third of the oar was out of water in his hand.

"No matter," said I. "There's no fear of her bilging, and the bottom looks as flat as a pancake. So let us turn to now and get her moored. We should have had to beach her somehow to come at the leak; if there's any tide here, and it looks to me as if there were, her grounding may save us a rare job."

Leaving the two men in the boat, the boatswain and I boarded the brig, and presently the men had made a couple of warps fast to the rocks on the port and starboard bow. We took these lines to the windlass, and hove them taut, so as to give the brig another start forwards should any more tide come to float her. When the men came aboard we all turned to and furled the sails, and by the time we had completed this job the sun had sunk behind the rocks on the port quarter, and the hull of the brig, and the water around us, and the bleak granite-like shore on either hand were all in gloom, whilst the crimson splendour was still gilding the summit of the rocks above us, and sparkling in the upper spars and yards, and reddening the rigging of our little vessel.

In a few minutes these illuminated lines faded, and turned black against the sky, in which the warm red glare was lingering, and at last over the whole hemisphere the evening drew its veil, and the stars blazed out over our heads and spangled the lipping water around the brig, and, saving our own voices, no other sound was to be heard but the

soughing of the wind sweeping through the upper rigging from over the rocks on our left hand, and the creaming of the little breakers all around the windward side of the island.

We were all utterly exhausted by our long afternoon's work, and were now beginning to feel the effects of the job of towing the brig under a scorching sun. But we were thirsty and hungry too, so Nelly went forwards with Matthews to get supper ready, whilst the rest of us lighted the lamps and sent the green lantern to the masthead, for, as I have said, our royal-yard stood many feet above the highest point of the rock, and our light therefore would make a beacon that could be seen all around the ocean for miles.

"Now, mates," said I when we had eaten our supper, looking around upon the faces of the men as they sat with their arms bare, and their hair tossed, and their brows glistening in the lamplight, "thanks be to Almighty God, we shall be able to sleep to-night with lighter hearts than we have known for a good many hours.

Where we are I don't know: though I would bet, if I had a sextant and Greenwich time aboard, you'd find my calculations are not twenty miles out when I tell you that our latitude is about $33^{\circ} 30'$ N. and 98° W. But be this as it may, this island falling in our road at a time when our look-out was a desperate bad one, is a thing to fill our hearts with gratitude; and taking all things as they have happened, we have been watched over, mates, in a manner few shipwrecked men have known. You'll agree with me that there's no harm in speaking these thoughts. God has been merciful, and we owe Him thanks."

"I've got nothen to say agin that, Mr. Lee," said the boatswain. "It's all right enough. There's been some wonderful orderin' in this here melancholy business, so far as we're concerned, from the beginning of it down to now, and I for one am thankful enough."

"The same here," murmured Matthews.

Johnson gave a terrific yawn.

"As it will be necessary to keep an anchor watch," said I—"for I don't mean

to run any risks—shall we draw lots? Or put it thus: I'll keep watch till eleven, the bo'sun till one, Johnson till three, and Matthews till five."

This was agreed to. Nelly then served out a glass of grog to each of us at my request, and when the men had smoked a pipe they went to their bunks, and I and Nelly on to the deck.

The sound of the wind among the rigging, whilst all on deck and around us was a breathless calm, startled me for the moment, and I put my hand on Nelly's arm and held up my finger to command silence; for so human and plaintive was the murmuring of the wind, that I could have sworn there were women and children moaning and wailing on the steep just beyond us. Inhospitable as the dark and naked outline of these low and barren rocks looked, with the stars shining on the very verge of the rough projections, to me they were inexpressibly precious; they relieved me from the crushing burden of my care; they offered us a refuge and a rest; and though our future was still so uncertain

as to appear even dark, my heart was lighter than it had been for days, and in the silence and gloom of the deck I took Nelly in my arms, thanking God again and again for the protection He had vouchsafed us down to this hour.

It was impossible not to feel a kind of awe as we looked round upon the rocks buried in gloom, with a thin blue scintillation defining the water-line against the base of the little cliffs; and the sound of the wind was like voices crying aloud in the silence. How long had this island been in existence? Probably ours were the first human tones which had ever broken the silence of these desolate rocks. The air was surprisingly soft and warm, and I sat me on the deck at Nelly's feet and laid my head on her lap, and in this way we remained talking, pausing sometimes to listen to the moaning overhead, and the occasional booming of the swell as it struck the island on its eastward side.

However, I would not suffer Nelly to remain with me longer than an hour, dear as her companionship was, and when she

was gone I had the deck to myself, and then, indeed, I felt the loneliness of the place as never loneliness had been felt by me before. No; although the sense of solitude aboard the brig during the first two days I had passed in her had been great beyond expression, yet it had not the awe, the mystery, the wonder, begotten by these rocks, albeit there were human beings sleeping close to my hand. I recalled the various stories I had read of men being cast away on islands similar to this; not the green and fruitful islands of Defoe, with their cool savannahs, their wild fruits, turtle, fowl, and crystal springs—but on naked, hard, desolate rocks like those which surrounded me, without water and without herbage; and I remember thinking how utterly impossible it was for people living ashore, or even for sailors who had endured no experiences of the kind, to realize the full horror of such a situation: to conceive the anguish of the unsheltered wretch looking round and round the sea for the sail that never hove in sight, with no other sound in his ears than the moan and

thunder of the waters, thinking of the home he was never more to behold, and with intolerable bitterness of the hundreds of ships sailing to right and left of him leagues beyond the horizon, any one of which he might believe in his anguish would come to his rescue if his condition were but known.

But, meanwhile, what was our condition? what injury had the brig received? should we be able to repair her? was some unforeseen calamity to frustrate our hope of reaching inhabited land by the agency of this brig?

As I glanced up at the green lantern, a dismay I could not control visited me when I reflected upon the immensity of the ocean in which we lay wrecked, and how scarce were ships in these latitudes. Had we been cast away further north or east, every day would probably have brought some sail in sight upon the horizon; but here we were out of the track of every trader to any part of the world, unless an adverse wind should bring some vessel bound from Australia to the

western American coast within range of us, or unless we had the good fortune to be discovered by some South Seaman cruising in these latitudes, or bound for some Chilian port.

I aroused the boatswain at eleven o'clock, feeling intensely wearied. We exchanged a few words, and I then tumbled into my bunk and was sound asleep in a minute.

I was awakened by some one tugging at my arm. I opened my eyes, and they rested on the face of Matthews, who held the cabin lamp. I did not recognize him at once, for the light was strong in my eyes, and what with my being half asleep and half blinded, and his face looking like a drowned man's in the mystifying glare, I was both bewildered and alarmed, and blinked at him like an owl at a ghost.

What increased my puzzlement, too, was that either he or the deck was aslope: he leaned towards me as though he were about to topple nose foremost into my bunk.

"I want you to come on deck, sir," said he. "I want you to listen to something."

"Why, what's the matter, Matthews?"

Has my watch come round again? I haven't been turned in ten minutes, have I?"

"Why, yes, you have, sir. It's half-past four, and daylight's breakin'. But please to step on deck—there's something for you to hear, sir."

Being by this time wide awake, I instantly jumped out of my bunk, but no sooner did I touch the deck than I fetched away, and had to grab hold of Matthews to bring myself up. The deck, indeed was almost as though the brig lay over to a stiff breeze.

"Hillo!" I ejaculated, "the water's left us adry, has it? Why, Matthews, this is the best thing that could happen to us, my man." And I hurried out of the berth, leaving the boatswain snoring at the top of his nose.

The grey of the dawn was in the sky, but between the rocks and in the creek it was as black as pitch. The brig lay on her port broadside with a list that made the deck by no means easy walking. The first thing I heard was the sound of water gushing like a pump. The noise was forward. I took the lamp from Matthews, and picking my way along the deck, I arrived at the starboard

bow and held the lamp over. I could see nothing, but the gushing of the water was like a cascade. I bent on the end of a line to the ring of the lamp and slung the light over the side, and when I had lowered it to within a foot of the metal sheathing, the light suddenly sparkled in a jet of water that was pumping out of the brig's side as though it were being squirted through a force-pipe.

"Here we have the leak, Matthews!" I shouted; "and with the blessing of Heaven we'll put a stopper on that same before we're many hours older, that will make a cork of this hooker."

I drew up the lamp and listened to hear if any more water spurted from other parts of the hull. To starboard the only jet was the one that was making itself heard; but to port the vessel lay on her bilge so as to bring the water in the creek half-way up her chain-plates, and it was therefore impossible to tell whether she had any leaks in her below that line on that side.

However, I was overjoyed to find that we had a tide-way here; for, as from the build and strength of the brig I could not readily

bring my mind to believe that she had sprung a leak below her copper sheathing, it was clear from the fall of the water that had already taken place—and I was sure the ebb was not done yet—that enough of the hull would be left exposed to enable us to get at any leak above her copper and probably for some depth below it.

My spirits were now all on fire again, and telling Matthews to go and rouse up the boatswain and Johnson, I stood waiting impatiently for the growing dawn to diffuse sufficient light to give us a clear view around.

By the time the others had joined me the daylight lay broad upon the sky, and the first thing I noticed was that the ebb had left a great length of the head of the creek dry, so that the water now terminated at a point not above twelve feet forward of our jibboom. All the dry part was as smooth and pale as marble, spoon-shaped, and like the cement at the bottom of a fountain. Indeed, my belief was, and still is, that the bed of this creek had been wrought by a great discharge of lava and smoothed by the

action of the sea; for the whole formation of the island indicated a volcanic origin, as though a portion of coral deposit resting upon a submarine volcano had been hove to the surface of the sea and split into the rocks as they now lay by the ejection of lava through them.

The water was gushing out of the bow of the brig about two inches above the copper, a foot abaft the starboard cathead, supposing you drew a line straight down. The boat-swain had jumped into the boat alongside, and was now examining the leak.

"Well," said I to him, "what do you make of it?"

"Why, sir," he answered, "it's nothing more than a butt started. We shall be able to set that right in a very short time."

I told him to drop the boat a little astern, and I got into her, and saw that the leak was caused by the starting of the end of a plank that stood out and left a space big enough for a man's fist to go in. We ran our eyes carefully along the rest of the exposed surface of the hull, but no water issued from any other part of it.

“She looks tight enough this side, Mr. Lee,” said the boatswain, as we lay abreast of the vessel’s rudder. “Her copper looks wonderfully new, and clean too. She hasn’t been very long metalled. Is there any leak below the water on this side, I wonder? And how is she to port?”

“There is only one way of finding that out,” I answered; “we must let the water drain out of her as far as her list will suffer it to go and then stop the leak. We shall have the full flood at about five o’clock this evening. She will then float, and when she’s upright we’ll sound the bell, and that will tell the tale.”

We hauled the boat slowly around the port side of the vessel, narrowly examining the stern-port and rudder, and the frame of the brig under the counter; but not a drop of water came from any exposed portion of her this side. The sun had risen, and the brig’s spars from the tops up were all glittering in the brilliant silver light. The water in the creek reflected the bright azure overhead, and though there was not less than nine feet of it where our boat was, the

bottom lay perfectly visible and clear, and was as smooth here as it was higher up, but shelving fast, about two feet in ten, and every part of the brig being aground, her nose was in consequence cocked right up, just as she would have looked had she been run head foremost on to a beach.

“It’s a pity this creek ain’t likely to run hisself clean dry,” said the boatswain. “It ’ud give us a good chance to overhaul her bottom fore and aft. Didn’t I say she was a handsome boat, sir? Her planks might have come out of a navy yard. And look at her fastenings—copper everywhere! and if the water don’t deceive the eye, her bottom’s as fine as a yacht’s. I’ll tell you what it is, Mr. Lee: the *Morning Star* was no more intended for a timber vessel than I was; and to see such a hull as this with bow-ports is enough to set a parson cussing.”

There was no use in attempting to meddle with the leak until the vessel had done draining. Indeed, it would not have answered our purpose to touch it before that time, for we had the whole day before us, and seven or eight hours clear

before the flood made ; besides, the flowing of the water through the started butt (unless indeed the brig was leaky in other places) would go far to empty her without labour on our part.

I jumped on board again and looked through the scuttle into the forecastle. In consequence of her list and her drop aft, the forecastle was half empty of water. I told Johnson to bring me the cabin lamp, and I went down the forecastle steps until my foot was level with the water, and, holding up the lamp, I took a look round. There were a couple of hammocks swinging close against the deck, sodden and brown ; there were also six bunks, three of a side, but they were empty—as, indeed, I might have guessed, for the water would have floated everything out of them. The water lay black at my feet and gurgled with an ugly sound, and the lamplight gleamed with a ghastly radiance in it. Except the bunks and the hammocks nothing was to be seen. A feeling of awe and even of horror came over me as I stood looking into this dark hole. The hammocks, were like relics of human existence, and the

glimmer of them made me shudder; the place was as cold as the bottom of a well. I was glad to get out of it into the daylight, and to breathe the warm, sweet morning air.

I reckoned that the leak would not take very long draining, because the inclined posture of the brig would run the water away from the bows; and, indeed, I did not suppose there would be overmuch water in the whole hull either, for she was full of timber, and it did not leave much space for her to fill. I therefore told Johnson to get the galley fire lighted, so that we might have breakfast at once, as I meant to make a long day; and whilst this was doing, the rest of us set to work to saw some planks for a short stage to drop over the vessel's side in order to get at the leak, as the list of the vessel raised the butt out of our reach from the boat.

Whilst we were at this job Nelly came out of the cabin, looking alarmed to find the vessel all on one side, as she expressed it. I explained to her how this had come about, and what a mercy it was that it should be so, as it was not possible to guess how we

should have been able to come at the leak in any other way. It did me good to see the bright, happy light in my darling's eyes as she looked around. The mere presence of land was a delight to her, after our long interminable hours of sea and sky; for, with the exception of the Falklands, not a coast shadow had greeted our sight since the hour when the shore of the distant Isle of Wight had melted into the gloom of the English evening. Nor was this little island, bare and bleak as it was, and rendered even awful by the mystery of its tremendous ocean solitude, without a charm of its own in the hearty sunshine that was now slanting down upon the deck; for, besides the extreme delicacy of its coral grain, there was a certain fantasticalness in the irregularity of its little summits, its tiny declivities, the liliputian ravines and fissures here and there, and in the sweep of the creek, the water of which, viewed from the deck, was white and shining like quicksilver as it crept round the bend into the ocean, of which we could just catch a glimpse, and which ran up in a streak of delicate blue into the deeper blue of the sky.

When our morning meal was over, I went forward to see if the leek still drained, and found it gushing out with great force still, and splashing noisily into the water alongside.

Wishing to see what sort of hold the rocks gave our warps, and being also anxious to view the island, I hauled the boat to the port gangway, and, calling Nelly, helped her into it, and shoved the boat on to the beach at the end of the creek, leaving the men at work on the construction of the stage. I jumped out and gave my hand to Nelly, and she sprang like a fawn, her wide hat flapping, and a gay laugh breaking from her as her little feet twinkled down upon the beach.

“ Oh, Will ! ” she cried, as she looked at the shelving beach running up to the rocks, “ what a place for a picnic ! ”

This set me laughing like a fool. The very word “ picnic ” conjured up such ideas, such contrasts ! Young dandies, old mammas, girls flirting, old fogies thinking of the game pies and wine, music and dancing, and a gay ride home by moonlight ; and then our

shipwreck, this lonely island, hundreds of miles out in the greatest ocean in the world, the brig full of water, our very existence threatened by tremendous risks still ! Why, just as in certain moods a comical notion comes to you out of a great grief and sets you grinning—though God knows you would rather cry—so my sweetheart's exclamation brought the tears to my eyes ; but there was so much sadness mixed with my mirth, that I don't know which passion had most right to the tears.

As you may believe, there was not much to be seen in this island ; the whole circumference of it was not above one and three-quarter miles. The north-east side was a mere crust, so that I should have believed a strong sea would sweep all that part of it away. This was the highest point of it, and we got upon the top and looked around. But it was a ridiculously little height after all, for yonder was the masthead of the brig towering high above us, and it looked only a jump to the sea.

It was a bright morning, with a smart breeze blowing from the north-east. For

leagues and leagues the waters were all a-tremble, tossing, with sharp flashes of light, and of a pale and uniform blue, save where here and there the cloud-shadows lay in slate-coloured patches. There were no breakers at our feet, for on this side of the island, at all events, the rocks went sheer down into the water, for how many fathoms the imagination could not conjecture, and the water was as blue at the base of the cliff as it was five miles out; but at intervals the swell would strike the line of rock and, without breaking, heave to a height of twelve to fourteen feet up it in a huge sparkling volume of water, which, as it sank, left the rocks gushing like cascades and streaming with froth that looked like falls of snow. Seeing how high this swell rose in fair weather such as we were now having, I made no doubt this island was swept in a storm as effectually as our brig had been; nor can I say that I liked the look of the sun that morning. It was a very hot sun, yet there was a mistiness in its light that threatened wind.

However, I found the rocks to which our

warps were attached more solid than any fixings we should have been able to contrive, for there was no soil into which we could have driven stakes; and there being no more to see on the island, I put Nelly into the boat and shoved alongside the brig.

They had completed the stage, and it lay ready to fling over the side when the leak was done draining. The water in the creek was still ebbing, but very slowly now, and not above an inch and a quarter had fallen since daybreak. This being noticed, the boatswain made another tour of the brig, and reported that he could find no more leaks. But a good deal of the vessel, more especially aft, was under water, and therefore it would be impossible to say whether her bottom was sound or not until the leak forward was stopped and she was afloat.

As the masts of the vessel stood considerably above the island, and would bring more strain upon the warps than was desirable should a gale of wind come, I ordered Johnson and Matthews aloft to send down the royal and top-gallant yards. This job made a hole in the morning, and by the

time the yards were stowed on deck the pressure of the water from the leak had greatly decreased, and it was now but a thin rill. Fearing that this might go on for a long while yet, we manned the pumps, and in a few minutes had the lee quarter-deck afloat and the water gushing out of the scupper-holes in brawling streams.

After pumping for half an hour, we found the water just oozing from the leak. We accordingly set to again, and presently the leak had stopped draining. It was now hard upon noon, but, hungry and tired as we were, we were none of us disposed to knock off until we had securely stopped the leak. This was a matter of no great difficulty. We got the stage over the side, and the boatswain and I went on to it armed with a heavy hammer and some spikes half as long as our arm, of which there lay a whole parcel in the carpenter's chest. The end of the plank looked to have been wrenched from the timber, or rather driven from its fastenings, by a blow inside; otherwise it was perfectly sound, and the thickness and strength of it gave

us a good idea of the workmanship of the hull.

With a few swinging blows the boatswain drove the spikes through the plank end, and the butt went into its place. This being done to my satisfaction, I scrambled on deck, and despatched Johnson to the boatswain with some oakum and a calking-iron, all which things I found in the carpenter's berth. Nothing now remained but to pitch the seams; but there was no pitch on deck, and we would have to wait until the water was out of the hull to look for such stuff in the fore-peak. The ring of the calking-iron under the blows of the mallet was a pleasant sound. The boatswain was a thorough practical seaman, who knew every part of a ship as a watch-maker knows the works of a watch; and he handled the leak as nimbly and well as any expert ship's carpenter would.

By one o'clock he had done the calking, and paid the seams with tar as a make-shift until he could pitch them, and then came on deck, red and hot with his labour, and ready for his dinner, as indeed we all were.

So now, as far as we could dare imagine, the hull of the brig was tight, and there was nothing more to be done, so far as that part of the work was concerned, but to get the water out of her, wait until she was on a level keel, sound the well, and then, as the tide made, see if there were any more leaks.

We made despatch with our dinner, and though it was both my policy and my duty to maintain a discipline among my little crew, I told them I should not object to their lighting their pipes and smoking whilst they worked, as time was precious, and I could not afford them a half-hour for an idle sprawl and smoke. I did not like the look of the sky, and there was a moaning out at sea and a hollowness in the sound of the swell as it rose and sank against the outer rocks that, I thought, presaged wind. From every quarter but the south-west the hull of the brig would be protected from the seas; but the mouth of the creek opened in that quarter, and if a gale sprang up in that direction, it might roll in a nasty sea and perhaps strand and bilge the brig.

Our immediate duty, therefore, was to set

warps over either quarter; but it was the devil's own job to contrive fixtures to make the ends fast ashore. There was no bottom for an anchor to grip, and a whole day would have been spent in conveying ashore one of the only two big anchors we could get at. However, in the end, and after a consultation, we managed it in this way: we swayed up and lowered into the water a couple of light spare booms, which we landed, one on either shore; we jammed these booms behind the edge of some rocks, and lashed them as securely as we could; we then made the ends of the warps fast to these booms, which were of tough upland spruce, and strong enough to heave the rocks out before they parted, and took the inboard ends to the quarter-deck capstan and hove taut.

This work brought us to three o'clock in the afternoon, and the tide was making fast. The brig being moored as securely as we could make her, with warps over the bows and quarters, we turned to and manned the pumps afresh, and pumped for an hour, when the flood having set her on

a level keel, though she was not yet afloat forward, I sounded the well, and made eight feet of water in the hold. The creek was filling fast enough to settle the question of the hull's soundness in half an hour, and we took the opportunity of the interval to get tea, or supper as the last meal is called at sea. But, as may be supposed, we were terribly anxious; for it came to this: if the hull made water now that the leak was stopped, it would be clear that the leak was below the lowest point left exposed by the ebb tide, and we might find the utmost difficulty in coming at it, should we ever succeed in coming at it at all.

I did not stay above five minutes at table, and then went on deck and leaned over the vessel's side to watch the water rising. I was soon joined by Nelly, to whom I explained my hopes and fears, and we stood looking at the base of the opposite rocks, up which the water was creeping inch by inch. By this time the brig ought to be afloat forward; but it was hard to tell: there was not enough wind aloft to move her, and besides, her warps would

keep her steady. So, to ascertain if she was off the ground, I told Johnson to ease away the bow-warps, and the rest of us ran the capstan round, and the slack coming in, we saw in a moment that she was afloat.

She was still very deep, as so small a vessel must needs be with eight foot of water in her, but in comparison with her depth when afloat before, it was like looking down a hill to glance over her side. We raised a cheer that rattled among the rocks when we found she was afloat; and sprang to the pumps again, and pumped with all our strength for half an hour, and by this time the creek was full.

I sounded the well with a beating heart, and pulled out the rod, Nelly and the men standing round, *and made the water five feet.*

When I said this the poor fellows gave another ringing cheer, for now we might be sure there was no more water coming into the brig. Our delight was beyond expression. We were shipwrecked no longer, for with this tight brig of two hundred tons

we were our own masters, and could sail round the world if we chose, and for safety she was as good as a thousand-ton ship. The island no longer wore the character of a desolate, naked rock; it was rather a harbour of refuge, a little haven for ships to put into that needed repairs. I was so overjoyed that I could scarcely restrain myself from hugging Nelly to my heart; as it was, we all of us shook hands, and such was Johnson's transport that what must the man do but break into a regular sailor's shuffle, and toe and heel the deck with his naked feet until the slapping of the planks was like to set the other two imitating him.

I was resolved that we should all of us have a good night's rest, for what with pumping, and sending the yards down, and getting the booms ashore, and other jobs, the day's work had been a heavy one, and for this reason I determined to let the water remain in the brig that night and pump her out next morning.

Before knocking off we hove in the stern-warps another three fathoms, slacking the

lines forward, of course, to that extent, as I considered that we were moored too close to the head of the creek should a sou'-wester set in. I had also a mind to strike the top-gallant mast, but the weary air of the men discouraged me, and so I thought I would let it alone.

I had been too busy all this while to take particular notice of the weather, but happening to raise my eyes and observe the peculiar watery redness of the sky as it lay with the flush of the sunset upon it, I went up the rigging to have a view of the sea over the rocks, and going as high as the cross-trees I saw an angry sunset, the colour of the sky all around the clouds being a brick-red, the clouds themselves very sullen and dark, and rounded underneath, belly-wise, as though they held more than they could sustain, and only the edges next the sun illuminated. There was very little wind, but the sea was heaving with a confused running, and the impression conveyed was that of two swells, one coming from the westward and one from the north-east, where what little air there

was still hung. The heave of the sea was heavy around the island, and as I watched, the swell would run over the arm or reef that projected to the south-west and formed the southern boundary of the creek, in a coil of green water, the western extremity of which flashed with the redness of blood in the sunset, and sometimes as it poured it broke into foam and filled half the mouth of the creek with a surface of dazzling white froth, so that, at the distance at which I surveyed it, the water that way, when the swell burst over the reef and broke in foam, looked as though a terrific current was racing there, or that a water-spout was forming.

These frequent burstings of froth and the thunder of the swell to the east and west of the island, and the sullen fierce crimson of the sunset, and the calmness in the air, with the mighty deep heaving restlessly, formed an impressive scene of gloomy grandeur.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEATH OF THE BOATSWAIN.

I CAME down from aloft and told the boatswain we should have some dirty weather before the morning, and as there was a little daylight left we had another good look at the warps, and, being satisfied, went about to freshen ourselves up with a wash down.

“Johnson was askin’ me just now, sir,” said Sinnet, as he rubbed himself dry, “whether I thought you’d object to their having a little jollification this evening before turning in. You know what sailors are, Mr. Lee? They want their song and their yarn, and a smoke, and what they calls ashore a spell o’ free and easy.”

So far from objecting, I fell into the scheme at once: we had escaped a dreadful peril, the brig was afloat, we had all worked

desperately hard, and why should not we celebrate our good fortune by a song? So I called to the men and told them that I should not only be glad to listen to a song from them, but to give them a song myself, but on condition that I served out the grog, and that no man asked for more than I chose to give him.

This was agreed to, and the cabin being hot, we lashed the royal and top-gallant yards together, slung them from the gaff, opened the sails and made an awning of them over the top of the deck-house; we then brought up some chairs, a bottle of grog, a box of cigars, and made the cabin lamp fast to the yards over our heads. I contrived this arrangement for Nelly's sake. I wished her to be present, as I knew the men would value her company; and besides, they were all three steady men and true sailors, and there was nothing to fear from them in the way of "language" so long as I remained skipper of the bottle; but she could not have endured the tobacco smoke in the cabin.

So there we were with the sails over our

heads and the lamp shining down upon us ; and I believe a more picturesque interior than this was never illuminated, not to mention the extraordinary contrast of our revelry with the reality of our situation alone on a little island almost in the middle of the Pacific ; for we were all as smart as a bucket of salt-water can make a man. Moreover, the seamen had found an old hair-brush knocking about in the carpenter's berth, and had plied it to some purpose ; the boatswain wore the clothes he had taken from the mate's chest, had brushed his whiskers out, and with his hair soaped over his forehead, his bronzed face, lively eyes, bare throat and great hairy hands, looked the model of a burly English salt—one never to shirk work, a man to meet danger with a wooden face, a sea-jockey, a man to put your whole faith in. On either side of him sat his mates, Bob and Bill, vigorous, hearty men, sailors to the very incurving of their toes, their skins glistening like leather, their hands lolling by their sides, with their fingers curled up as though they still grasped a rope.

To look from them to Nelly was to appreciate the amazing jumps nature makes in her creations. The light, kind smile on her sweet lips showed me that she found something humorous in her situation ; she often glanced at me, with her soft grey eyes full of meaning. And did I wish her away ? Would I have preferred to think of her as safe at home at Burmarsh ? I dare not answer yes. As a sailor's sweetheart she was sharing her lover's perils, meeting sailors and living with them, watching the mighty deep in all its moods, learning its tenderness and fury, its fascination and its terror. But still, to find her here, to find her a partaker of my rough and stern experiences, never more brave than in the hour of supreme peril, because she was with me, impelled by a love whose resolution no danger could make her regret, to follow me and share with me whatever fate might befall, stirred my heart to the quick. Was not her devotion great enough to make any man proud ?

We were met for a festive purpose, but we were slow to come at it ; for though the men would have felt Nelly's absence, her presence

made them shy. At last she asked Sinnet to sing a song. He coughed and moved uneasily in his chair, and said that he was afeared his singing days was over. Time was when he could beat most men at hollering, but his voice had grown husky since them days; and Lord! what should he sing about? He only knew sailors' songs.

Well, a sailor's song would do; indeed, nothing *but* a sailor's song would do; and so, after balancing himself, and stretching out his legs as though he were settling down to an oar, and looking with a wandering eye first at Bob, and then at Bill, and then at Nelly, he opened his mouth and made a start. When he got to the end of the first verse, he flourished his hand and shouted "Chorus!" and though neither Nelly nor I had the air (the seamen knew it perfectly well) we joined in, and the whole length of the brig and the little island rang to our voices, the thunder of the swell coming in by way of accompaniment.

We were all supposed to be desperately tired, and perhaps we were; but the grog and the tobacco and the singing woke us up,

and I very much doubt if ever before that time five castaway persons joined in any sort of chorus with half the spirit that we exhibited.

All four of us men sang, and every man took care that his song had a chorus, otherwise it would have been thought but a very poor entertainment; and then we asked Nelly for a song. Without the least hesitation she sang a little ballad about a rose, whose place, when it faded, was taken by a bud. It took me away to Burmarsh to hear her. I had heard her sing that song before, and it brought up the lavender-scented drawing-room, the garden outside all abloom with flowers, my feelings as I listened, the tinkling of the piano, Phœbe's face, and a little kitten that got foul of my legs all the time the song was going. Her voice had a quiver in it just before she ended; I dare say her thoughts were like mine, hundreds of leagues away.

Of course the song was not much to the men's tastes; Jack's heart doesn't lean towards roses; but they clapped their hands and stamped their feet when she had done,

and drank her health with a great flourish of pannikins, every man making a napkin of his arm when the draught was down, and smiling and nodding as though approval were a long job and not to be discharged in a hurry.

In this way an hour passed, and Sinnet was in the middle of a long yarn, full of "says I's" and "says he's," when a peculiar sound struck my ears, and I motioned silence.

"Blowed if it ain't like a kettle boilin' over," exclaimed Matthews, and this as well expressed the sound as words could put it.

I walked a few steps clear of the temporary awning, and, looking up, found that it was an intensely dark night, not a star to be seen, and not a breath of air.

"What the deuce can that noise be?" I said to the boatswain, who had followed me.

He bent his ear, and after listening answered, "It's either a hurricane coming up the sea, or else there's a tremendous fall o' rain somewheres near."

"Johnson, Matthews!" I shouted, "get these sails down before they're blown away." And having sent Nelly below, I

was passing the chairs over to the boatswain, when, as I thought, it began to rain.

“Where’s the wind?” shouted the boatswain. “Do you taste this, sir? *it’s salt!*” Scarcely had he said this when there broke out overhead a wild and terrific roaring, and looking up I could distinctly perceive columns of white foam or spray hurled over the island, and turning the whole black surface of the sky into a pale glimmering ash-colour, as though a heavy fall of snow were sweeping over us horizontally. The hurricane came right out of the west, and our protection, therefore, was the low line of rock that formed the western boundary of the creek, and that shored it to the bend, almost abreast of which we now lay, having slackened our bow-ropes, as I explained.

Although not above half our masthead and only a small portion of the fore-topmast were exposed above the rock, yet, in spite of our having sent the two yards down, and there being no other surface offered than the bare poles, the furious wind catching these heeled the brig two or three streaks over as though a tackle had been

got up aloft, and was being bowsed down on the starboard shore. I wanted no more remarkable illustration of the tremendous force of this hurricane; it seemed an incredible thing. No man could have got me to believe it had I not viewed it myself, for it seemed impossible that a hull with seven foot of water in her could be heeled over by a gale striking so small an exposed surface as half her topmast, and but one top-gallant and royal mast with the yards down. Yet, as I have said, had the vessel been heeled over by a tackle from the masthead, she could not have lain more steadily aslant; and the fact was made all the more astounding to our senses by the rocks so sheltering the deck, that whilst overhead the bellowing was hideous and shocking to hear, and the spray whirling in dense clouds, and our exposed rigging shrieking like tortured women, the air below circled only in short draughts, and all the wet that fell was the spray rebounding from the summit of the rocks on our right.

This was a sudden breaking up of our little festivity with a vengeance. I cannot

express how much I regretted now not having sent down the top-gallant mast, but it was too dark to undertake the job at this time ; and so far from being able to work up aloft, I doubt if any man would have been able to hold on, for the roaring of the wind was so prodigious, and its velocity so tremendous, that over and over again I would cast my eyes in the direction of the great lump of rock on the port quarter, expecting to hear it bowled over into the middle of the creek.

The first thing we did was to brace the yards so as to point them to the wind ; and then I told the boatswain that at all hazards we must get a warp over the port beam, as I was sure that, unless this hurricane dropped suddenly, we should have the seas breaking in mountains over the weather rocks, which were but fifteen feet high, and should the port bow or quarter rope go, the vessel would go to pieces on the lee shore.

This was a job easy to suggest but horribly hard to accomplish, chiefly because it was so dark that we could not see the deck on which we trod, nor even the out-

lines of each other's figures, and also because we should have to get another boom ashore, for even should we succeed in finding a rock fit to bend the warp to, we dare not hazard the chafe of the edges upon the hemp.

However, there was no time for debating, for we all of us knew that every moment was raising a sea that must presently sweep the weather shore, and then we should not be able to work at all. So, taking the cabin lamp and the green lantern forward, we turned to with desperate energy, and in seven minutes we succeeded in swaying up and lowering a stout boom in the water; we then brought the boat alongside, and tumbled into her, taking the lanterns with us, and towed the spar to the shore that lay abreast of the brig; and by dint of lifting and shoving and hauling, we got the boom jammed behind some rocks and lashed it to them.

All this time the hurricane was raging over our heads, and the spray was falling in perfect showers in consequence of the rising sea, and we could hear the heavy breakers

snarling and snapping and booming ferociously against the other side of the rocks, at the lee base of which we were toiling, while the mingled green and white lights of the lanterns flashed in my hands on the faces and fingers of the men as they kneeled upon the spar, hauling taut the ropes' ends which bound it to the rocks, and threw a faint unearthly light around us, and glimmered on the water that lay calm at our feet, and was only just blurred by the dropping of the spray, and the fierce small rushings of draughts of wind.

Having made fast the end of three stout lines to this boom, we got into the boat and were just shoving off, when a whole sheet of water blew over the head of the rocks, flying clean above us, and striking the side and deck of the brig a blow that echoed like the report of a gun. We got on board as fast as ever we could, and hoisted up the boat, and then thoroughly overhauled the brig, lashing everything that was likely to be washed away, hauling taut all the running gear, and snugging the vessel in every practicable way. We had

another look at the warps, and finding them all secure, we rigged up a square of canvas in the main-rigging to serve the man on watch as a shelter against the seas flying over into the creek; and there being nothing more to do, I told the men to go below and turn in all standing, that is, to lie down in their clothes, ready for the first call. It was my intention to keep watch, I told them; and, indeed, this was no hardship, for I should have remained on deck under any circumstances, being a great deal too anxious to turn in.

The night was so intensely black that it was enough to scare a man to look up. It was like being in a cellar. If it had not been for the haze of the light in the cabin, there would have been nothing for the eye to rest upon. This was bad enough, but the hooting of the hurricane, and the bellowing of the rising surges pouring over one another, made the darkness awful. I would catch myself wound up into a high pitch of nervous expectation, as if something wild and terrible was about to happen, though I could not imagine what.

The waves were beginning to fly over the rocks on the left-hand side in earnest. There was nothing to be seen, but every few minutes a whole ocean of water would plump alongside and aboard, hitting the decks a thump fit to beat them in, whilst the water for twenty fathoms forward and abaft the brig would flash up in fire under the tremendous downpour, and instantly be swallowed up in the universal darkness; and whilst the lower portions of the seas which dashed over the island dropped like lead in the calm of the creek, the rest of them which was grasped by the wind hissed with a sound that rose above the thunder of the gale as they were hurled twenty and thirty feet high, and lashed and thrashed the exposed part of our masts and rigging as though a giant were flogging them with a cat, the tails of which were made of hawsers.

I now noticed that the brig was beginning to pitch a little. This was to have been expected, for the send of the heavy sea outside was sure to run up the creek; but though it was to have been expected, I say, yet I had overlooked it, and the idea that as

the tide ran out the waves might be strong enough to lift and drop the brig on to the hard bottom of the creek in a manner to break her back or to burst her open, frightened me mightily.

And now I own I did not know what to do. If I called up the men and warped the vessel by her bowlines up the creek until she took the ground, how could I be sure that the next flood would bring up water enough to float her? A submarine disturbance might leave half the creek adry, or a shift of wind might modify the tide, and then here we should be with our vessel aground, and no means of floating her. But, on the other hand, if I let her lie where she was, to be tossed upon the reflex of the seas outside, she might stave her bottom in.

I resolved to confer with the boatswain, and had scarcely reached the cabin, when such an immense body of water came roaring over the shore right on to the vessel, that I thought for a moment a rock had come aboard of us. The brig quivered fore and aft under the shock, and had I not instantly shut the deck-house door the cabin would have been

filled. This was as bad as being at sea ; indeed, more weight of water flooded us than we should have got outside ; for the height of the rocks over which the seas were bursting was fifteen feet, and I dare say the gale carried the water ten feet higher, so that what fell on the brig dropped from a height of twenty-five feet. It was enough to split the decks open and to kill a bullock, had it struck it.

Either the boatswain heard me shut the door or was coming out to me at that moment, for he stepped forth from his berth, shaking his head with a grave face. He said he could not sleep, and that the sound of the water falling like a dozen thunderbolts on to the deck was enough to turn his hair grey. He had hoped we should have lain snug in that creek, but who could have guessed the water would fly over the island in that way ?

I answered that I did not think the water that fell aboard our worst danger ; the brig was heaving on a bit of a sea in the creek, and the motion not only threatened our warps, but, as the tide shoaled, the water

bade fair to drop the brig on the hard bottom and break her back. I gave him my ideas of the risk of leaving her where she was, and also the risk of warping her up the creek so that the tide might leave her stranded. But he strongly objected to the latter alternative, and said that if we did anything at all it would be best to slacken away forwards and let her drop astern into deeper water.

To this I replied, that if we dropped the brig astern we should be obliged to let the beam-warp run away at an angle which would greatly diminish its holding power. However, before we acted I resolved to take soundings, and having noticed a small lead in the carpenter's chest, I entered the berth and found Johnson asleep on the tool-chest, and had to arouse him before I could open the lid. He and his mate belonged to an order of sailors who could sleep in the car of a balloon in the centre of a thunderstorm ; but just as I had got him on to his legs a dozen tons of water came crashing down on the deck-house : this made him wide awake in a moment, for the sound

was enough to bring a dead man out of a vault, and he wanted to know if we had drifted out to sea.

I briefly explained our position, and finding nothing to answer for a lead-line, and knowing that I should only break my shins, and perhaps get washed overboard by going forward and groping among the raffle, I took the lamp, and bidding the boatswain close the cabin door after me, I sprang upon deck and ran aft with what speed I could, and unrove the peak halliards. The water was half-way up my legs, and sluicing through the scupper-holes in cataracts; the spray rang through the air like hail, but it was almost calm on deck, and the contrast between the stillness down here and the furious raging that was going on above, at so small a height that a few moments of climbing would have carried me into the thick of it, produced a sensation no pen could describe.

I was so expeditious that I had unrove the halliards and was back again in the cabin before any more water came aboard; and now, having got the lead-line ready, it became necessary to face these falling seas

once more, and so great was the peril, that I surely had not ventured it were it not that I was resolved to make or find the brig as safe as human means could contrive, once for all, and immediately, at any risk to myself.

I told the boatswain to stay where he was, as I wanted no help to take the soundings; but he answered that either I must let him go alone or take him with me; and there being no time for argument, we sallied forth and ran as fast as our legs would take us to the fore part of the brig, he holding the lamp and I the lead-line.

The brig having a list, owing to the heavy pressure of the hurricane upon the masts, and her bulwarks being very high, we could find some protection by crouching; so we waited under the shelter of the bulwark until the next sheet of water had blown over, when I dropped the lead overboard whilst Sinnet held up the light. On the lead touching the bottom, I made a knot in the part of the line that was level with the rail of the bulwark, as I could pretty accurately guess the height of the rail from

the water's edge, and then coiled the line in my hand and waited for a chance to run aft.

You have doubtless seen the waves dashing over a sea-wall or the side of a pier on a rough day, and noticed how capriciously the seas strike, sometimes affording half a minute's interval, sometimes dashing blow after blow in rapid succession, until the air is fogged with the smoke of the spray and bright with the glancings of the blobs of green water. But in our case, whilst we had to deal with the capriciousness of the monstrous ocean seas it was necessary for our lives' sakes that we should guess the intervals, for the seas which fell did not blow off in smoke, but dropped in ponderous dead-weights, so that did but one of these sheets of water fall upon us, it were a mercy if it did not stun and strangle us upon the spot. Had there been light, we might have seen these flying clouds of water in time to dodge them, but it was pitch dark; we could not imagine they were coming until the thunder of their fall was resounding through the hull; the boiling

and roaring of the surges around the rocks made such a horrible din, it was impossible to hear the crash of the breaker that would have warned us of the swooping flood.

Presently came a sea, the tremendous violence of which we could only measure by the fearful and monstrous boom of it as it struck the deck and the shore beyond, and raised a swell that hove the brig a fathom into the air. The water flooded the decks up to our armpits, and went roaring and foaming away to the stern; it would have swept me off my legs, but for the grip I had taken of a belaying-pin. As it was, the receding water dashed the lantern out of the boatswain's hand, and we were left in total darkness.

"Get you to the cabin, Sinnet!" I shouted. "Now's our chance!" And I floundered aft, dropped the lead over the quarter, tied a knot, and coiling the line over my arm, made a start for the cabin. In consequence of the vessel's list, most of the water was on the starboard hand, yet even on the port side of the deck it was like wading through a pond. I went feel-

ing my way along the port bulwarks, and crouching under them; for now that the cabin lamp was extinguished, there was only the green lantern left to light the interior of the deck-house, and as but half of it was glass it threw no reflection at all upon the skylight, so that I could only guess where I was, and therefore you may imagine my condition—the water above my knees, the night so pitch dark that I could not tell whether I was before or abaft the main-mast, whilst I was afraid to leave the shelter of the bulwarks lest I should miss the cabin door and be killed, whilst I was groping for the door, by a fall of water.

However, after waiting a long three minutes, and finding that no more water fell, I stretched forth my hands and went across the deck, and by good fortune I struck the cabin door, which I immediately opened, but could not shut it in time to prevent a rush that flooded the cabin floor fore and aft. The green lantern stood upon the table; nobody had thought of opening the glass, and the reflection on the faces of the men, and on the bulkheads and all

around, was an extremely ghastly illumination to come suddenly upon out of the pitchy darkness of the deck.

I found the boatswain sitting at the table, leaning his head on his hands; he was streaming wet, his hair hung over his fingers, and there was a pool of water on the table at his elbows. Nelly stood by his side with some brandy, and both the seamen were at the foremost end of the table.

“What is the matter with Sinnet?” I asked, shaking my legs to get some of the water out of my shoes. “Is he hurt?”

“When he came off the deck just now he fell down: he didn’t capsize over anything; he dropped like a man in a swoond, sir,” answered Johnson.

I slued the lantern round and opened it so as to get the white light into the cabin; as I did so the boatswain raised his head and said in a low voice, “It must ha’ been that sea as knocked me silly, Mr. Lee; I was all right until I fetched this here cabin, and then my knees give way. But I feel better now, sir;” and he took the

glass from Nelly and emptied it, but his hand shook as though he had the ague, and he seemed to find it difficult to open his teeth so as to drink.

Seeing this, I immediately ordered Johnson and Matthews to take him to his berth, strip and dry him, and get him into the bunk. When they laid hold of him gently by the arms, he looked up bewildered, and on one of them saying, "Come along, bo'sun; when you're shifted and turned in you'll be right enough, shipmate," he got up slowly and quietly and went with them; but his manner and walk frightened me: whether he had been internally injured or whether he had received a violent shock on the nerves I could not tell. I turned to Nelly and exclaimed, "God grant nothing may go wrong with him! He is like my right arm to me. Were you here when he came off the deck?"

"Yes. I came out of my berth almost immediately after you, and he went on deck," she replied. "He fell suddenly just as Johnson described. The two sailors raised him and he sat down at the table

groaning a little. I fetched some brandy, and then you came in." Then, looking at me, she cried, "My darling, your clothes are wringing wet! why is it necessary for you to be on deck?" and so saying she poured me out some brandy, of which I stood greatly in need.

"The brig must be watched, Nell," I answered; and the shattering of a sea at that moment on the deck, and a short but strong roll of the hull, recalled me to the work I had in hand. Fetching a three-foot rule from the carpenter's berth, I measured off the line from the knots to the lead, and allowing for the height of the rail and the depth of water the brig drew, I found there were three and a quarter fathoms under her bows, and five fathoms aft; from these figures I subtracted the fall of the ebb, and was satisfied that the vessel would have enough water to ride in, without risk of touching the bottom, should there come as heavy a swell again as was now rolling.

This discovery cheered me, and I applauded myself for my perseverance in taking these soundings and satisfying my

mind. I opened the door of the mate's berth, that the men might hear the news, and exclaimed that all danger of the swell grounding us being over, we had nothing to fear whilst our warps held, for it would take more water than was now coming aboard to do this massive little brig any hurt.

"D'ye hear that, bo'sun?" cried Matthews, cheerfully; but he was answered by a strange grunting noise. I waited until they had got the poor fellow undressed and dry in the bunk with a blanket over him, and then endeavoured to get him to tell me where he was hurt, but he kept his eyes closed and breathed stertorously, answering vaguely like a man dozing; so I came away, greatly depressed again, for his appearance was very alarming, and the more so because none of us knew where he was hurt. Matthews fancied it was in the head, and I thought so too, from having seen the poor fellow sit clasping his temples. The sea that struck the lamp from his hand had indeed been a terrible fall of water, and whether it had beaten him down or driven him against some hard projection I could

not imagine : it was enough that this bold, brave, useful seaman had been hurt, and I grieved like a child over the fear that his injury was a serious one.

Meanwhile Nelly had got me some dry clothes, and I was glad enough to be rid of my streaming garments, which I threw off in the carpenter's berth. When I had shifted myself and come back into the living-room, as I have sometimes termed that division of the cabin in which we ate our meals, Nelly asked my permission to watch by the boatswain. Glad as I should have been to think of my darling sleeping through the hours of this night, yet the life of the boatswain was so precious to me, and his manly, cheerful nature had excited in me such an affection for him, that I would not deny her ; and, indeed, this was a duty for which her uncomplaining character and her devoted tenderness of spirit admirably fitted her, nor could any one of us three men have filled that part as she could.

The wild and dreadful gale was still at its height, and the water pouring in great seas

over and on to us. These falls were now almost continuous. It was impossible to go on deck, nor could we have done any good by venturing there; nay, every time we opened the cabin door we incurred a serious peril; for the main-deck was afloat, and the least opening of the door let the water in, and, strong as the bulkheads were, yet, as all our provisions were in the after-compartment, and most of them were of a kind to be ruined by salt-water, it would have been madness to risk the flooding of the cabin.

Now that Johnson and Matthews were awake, they had not the heart to turn in again. Truly the uproar outside was in the highest degree intimidating—more so than any description I can give will convey. The men said they preferred to keep watch with me, and for some time their talk was of the boatswain. They spoke of him with the tenderness of women. I could not have imagined these rough fellows had such gentle thoughts in them.

Several times I went into the berth where the boatswain lay, and looked at him. The

little place was lighted by a single candle stuck in a bottle, and the light was but a poor one. Never once since he had been laid in his bunk had he stirred or opened his eyes. His breathing was regular, but very loud. It touched me to the quick to see his features, placid, as I believe they were, with insensibility, lying on the rude, unsheeted bolster, his hair lying all lank over his brown forehead, his face scarred like a rock with years of salt and weather, his great, muscular hands lying helpless on the blanket, and his shapely, solid throat, that was burned by the sun to a dark brown under the chin, and all below as fair and white as a girl's flesh, exposed by the open shirt.

"I hope—I *hope* there is nothing seriously the matter with him, Nelly," I said. •

She looked up at me with glistening eyes and a sad shake of the head. Common misfortune and danger and suffering had filled both our hearts with a great kindness for this manly English sailor, and the sorrow with which I beheld him lying stricken was altogether independent of the sense of the

heavy blow his loss would be to our little company. Besides, it was he who had snatched Nelly from the deck of the *Waldershare* and saved her life; and when I thought of him, only a few hours before singing merry songs and relating his quaint stories, and now viewed him lying as helpless as a baby, my heart weighed in me like lead.

I had been pacing up and down the little cabin for above an hour. The two sailors sat with folded arms at the table, listening with me to the ceaseless roaring of the hurricane and the wild washing of the flying seas, whilst the little brig was rolling to a real tumble in the creek; and I was peering through the little windows in fruitless efforts to penetrate the ponderous inky blackness in search of any break in the clouds or for any glimpse of the rocks, so that I might see whether the warps held us in our station or not, when a terrific stroke of lightning flashed overhead, so frightfully brilliant that, but for the greenish tinge in the light, one might have thought that the very sun had leapt into the sky and vanished in a breath. I was

looking through the foremost window at the time, and every visible thing started out of the midnight blackness like a picture drawn in fire; and immediately after there came such a wild crash of thunder that the mere roar of it struck me motionless and breathless.

“Hark!” shouted Johnson, leaping on to his feet and holding up both his hands. “My God Almighty! the island’s going!”

Amid the hollow booming of the thunder as it rattled away into the distance there was to be heard a rumbling sound of a most extraordinary character. I can only liken it to the noise caused by the wheels of a heavy van passing over a stony road, and the whole brig trembled just as a house trembles when such a van as I mean passes the door. This sound did not last above ten seconds. It was then followed by a mighty splash, and at the same moment a great wave poured over the brig and washed away aft, so high that the light in the cabin was reflected in the black water two-thirds the height of the window through which I had been looking.

We none of us spoke; we did not know what had happened, nor what was next to come. For my own part, the frightful flash of lightning, coupled with Johnson's shouts, had so capsized my nerves that I had not yet had time to rally myself, and stood holding by the table breathing quickly, the sweat pouring down my face, and my eyes fixed on the black window-panes.

"Is this rain?" suddenly exclaimed Matthews.

There could be no mistaking the sound; it was falling in a perfect thunder on the deck-house, and we could hear nothing but the noise of it.

"What has happened?" I cried. "What was that strange noise? Has the island gone, indeed!"

"God ha' mercy on us!" exclaimed Johnson, almost cowering as he stood. "This is worse than being water-logged out at sea."

There was no alteration in the movements of the brig; she rose and fell as before, and I began to breathe more freely, for I considered that if any portion of this

island had been swept away we should be experiencing a very different kind of sea.

We remained silent, listening to the rain that was making the water boil on the main-deck, and thundering overhead with a hurricane-note, expecting we knew not what, and above all dreading another flash of lightning, when the rain ceased with extraordinary suddenness, and was followed by a breathless silence overhead, amid which nothing was to be heard but the heavy breathing of the boatswain and the gushing of water. The brig stood upright on a level keel, and rolled but very gently. Matthews passed his arm over his forehead, and came to my side of the table and peered through the skylight.

“Why, Mr. Lee,” he suddenly cried, “what are those lights, sir?”

I looked, and saw that they were stars. Hearing nothing, I stood upon the table and opened the skylight. A little stream of water poured down. I looked and listened. The stars were shining, and no sound but the gushing of water struck my ear.

"The gale's blown itself out, boys!" I cried, letting the skylight fall: "the sky is full of stars!"

The two men raised a cheer, that was instantly silenced by Nelly coming out of the mate's berth, and holding up her hand.

"Hush!" she exclaimed softly. "Will, I fear he is dying. Come and look at him."

I had seen death before, and knew it again, miserable as was the light that glimmered upon this brave, rough face; the breathing was terribly oppressed and noisy. He had stretched himself out so as to throw his head a little beyond the bolster, and his chin pointed upwards; he had clenched his hands, and the candle-light glittered in the sweat-drops on his forehead. I was awed to behold his eyes open and turned upon me.

"Do you wish to speak—is there anything you want?" said Nelly, with exquisite tenderness, bending her face close to his.

His lips moved, but he did not articulate. There stood at the foot of the bunk a

pannikin containing a little weak brandy and water; I put my arm under his head and raised him, and moistened his lips.

"Where is the pain, Sinnet?" I said.

"Where are you hurt, my man?"

He tried to move his arm, and a faint smile played over his mouth.

"Mis-ter Lee," he said in a voice just above a breath, and speaking with so much difficulty that it was agony to hear him, "kind-ly say a prayer—please to——" His voice melted away.

I put my hands to my face—for had I knelt my face would have been out of his sight—and prayed aloud. I asked God to be merciful to this poor sailor, to forgive him any sins he had committed, to take him to His holy love should it be His command now that he should die; and in such words I prayed.

When I had done I found his lips moving, but his eyes were glazing fast, and fixed in an upward look. As Nelly could serve no end in remaining in this berth, and as this dying face was no proper sight for her to watch, I led her to the

other end of the cabin, insisting that she should take some sleep, and pointing out that danger no longer existed, that the night was fair and calm, and that with the blessing of God we should be at sea, and heading for the American mainland before many more hours had passed.

I then came back to the boatswain and found the two sailors watching by him.

"There don't look to be any hope, sir," whispered Johnson.

"Hope!" I replied, in a low voice. "Do not you see that he is dying, and will be dead in a few minutes? This is hard upon us, mates, and hard upon him——" The choking sensation in my throat prevented me from saying more.

He continued in this condition for about ten minutes, his breath gradually failing until not the least respiration could be detected; and I believed him dead, and was about to cover his face, when he threw up both his hands, and in a feeble, deep note, cried, "Coming, sir!" as though some one were hailing him, and then he lay dead indeed, his arms gradually falling until they rested alongside of him.

I was no doctor, and could not guess what manner of injury it was that had caused his death; but never before had any stranger's death affected me as this man's did: had I lost a brother I could not have felt more grieved. I covered his face and came away from the berth so oppressed and broken-spirited, that I could have sat me down and wept like a girl.

Ours was a situation, however, that would not give much room for sentiment. The death of the boatswain had carried our thoughts away from the terrifying incidents of the night, but the sense of them came back very strong upon me now, and particularly the memory of the rumbling noise that had made me believe the island was fetching away.

It was past two, and the night as still as the tomb. I opened the door of the deck-house, and found that the water had drained away off the decks. It was a clear starlight night, but everything lay in shadow in the creek. Now that I was in the air I could hear the swell, left by the hurricane, fretting fiercely outside, and wash-

ing the rocks heavily. There was nothing to be seen by looking around, save the naked outline of the low shore on either hand of us, in which, though I scanned it attentively, I could see no change; and therefore could not conceive what the rumbling noise had signified, unless occasioned by a disturbance under water.

All was well with us aloft, however, for the outlines of the masts were plain enough against the stars, and this I reckoned a great mercy after that flash of lightning. The warps were secure, with the exception of the warp over the port bow, which I found slack; we hauled it in, and on examining the end of it by the cabin lamp (which Johnson had kicked against as he came on deck and trimmed and lighted), we found that it had either chafed in halves or had given under a strain. But we had enough warps over to hold us without this on a fine night, and without wind aloft, and having had no sleep since five o'clock on the preceding morning, I told Johnson and Matthews to arrange to keep watch between them, during the next four hours,

and to let me sleep until six o'clock, unless there should be real cause to disturb me. Then bringing the mattress of the hammock out of the berth where the poor boatswain lay, I laid it on the floor on the carpenter's cabin, threw myself upon it, and fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO COMPASSES.

THE men let me rest until six, as I had told them. Matthews aroused me, and there was an air of eagerness in him that, I may say, I noticed before I was wide awake.

“You can see what gave way in the night, sir,” he exclaimed, “and made the hullabaloo.”

I jumped up, having thrown myself down completely dressed, and followed him into the bow of the brig ; and there, lying as far away again from us as our jibboom end, and in the middle of the creek, was a huge rock, half as big as our vessel, showing a surface of about nine feet above the water that flowed around it. It was a rock I had noticed, and indeed stood on, when I was ashore with Nelly, lodged about a hundred feet above the land that sloped down into

the head of the creek ; and it had probably been uprooted and thrown down the incline by a thunderbolt, or by some convulsion that had occurred when we heard the rumbling noise. There it lay, in the very place I had proposed to warp the brig to that the ebb might leave her aground, so that had it struck either the bows or the side of the brig it would have dashed her into staves. As it was, it had done us no further harm than to carry away our warp.

I returned to the quarter-deck, and sprang into the main-rigging and climbed into the cross-trees in order to have a look round. It was a brilliantly clear morning, with a pleasant breeze from the south-west, and the sea stretched all around in a sheet of bright blue, heaving under a long and somewhat heavy swell from the westward. The water was pouring in sparkling foamless coils over the reef in the south, and rising and falling in green transparent hills against the sides of the rocks on the port side of the mouth of the creek ; but so far as I could make out there was no alteration in the form or appearance of the island.

The experiences of last night, however, determined me upon getting away as soon as possible from this place, and taking my chance on the wide waters. It is true that, but for the shelter afforded by the island, the brig, water-logged as she would have been, must in all likelihood have gone to pieces in the hurricane, and we should have perished; but now that the leak was stopped we should be safer at sea, even in a gale of wind, than in this creek, exposed to the beating of the water as it flew over the rocks; and so I made up my mind to get away from it as soon as possible.

Neither of our boats had suffered during the night from the breaking of the sea, though it was the strangest luck in the world that they had not both been knocked to pieces; they were full of water, and that was all, and it was no hard matter to pull out the plugs and let the water run. Having reached the deck, I called the men and proposed that we should bury the boat-swain at once, by sewing the body up in the hammock, and sinking it a short way beyond the entrance of the creek. Indeed,

I wanted to get this sad duty over, as I cannot describe how depressing to us, situated as we were, and after our late severe trials, was the thought of this dead body aboard, and how the knowledge that it was lying yonder in the mate's berth made us feel the loss of his burly presence and his strong, willing hands.

I asked Johnson to assist me to sew the hammock round the body, but he seemed to shrink with a kind of horror from handling and seeing the corpse; on which Matthews said he would help me. I was nearly reproaching Johnson for his cowardice to a dead shipmate; but I could not but remember my own superstitious horrors aboard this vessel when I was first in her; and this man had suffered more than I, for his had been the experience of the open boat at sea, and so I had not the heart to abuse him. I therefore told him to light the galley fire whilst we went about our sad work; and having procured some twine and palms and needles from the carpenter's berth, we took down the hammock and put the body in it, dressed as

it was, all very quietly, so as not to bring Nelly out before the body was in the boat, and we then sewed up the hammock.

This being done, we went on deck and lowered the port quarter-boat, and brought it to the gangway, and placed the body in it. I then knocked on Nelly's door, and told her our errand, and that we should not be long gone. This I did for fear that when we were away she should come on deck and find no one aboard, and no signs of us anywhere.

The three of us then jumped into the boat, each taking an oar, and after we had got a piece of rock from the shore to fasten to the clews of the hammock so as to keep it sunk, we pulled swiftly down the creek. The sun shone strongly upon us, and the water over which we rowed was beautifully transparent. The further we advanced down the creek the more we could feel the reflex action of the heavy ocean swell beyond. There never was a more bitter mission of its kind than ours, nor one that cut more deeply into the feelings of those concerned in it. It was

not only that we had lost a shipmate, but a helpmate, whose strength and will and knowledge had rendered him more precious than words can express to our small and weary company.

In ten minutes we reached the mouth of the creek, protected somewhat from the swell by the western rock, where the water was coiling over the long thin sweep of beach, while the sunshine sparkled in dazzling gleams on the coral rocks as the swell that washed them subsided, and left them full of glittering cascades ; and here we threw in our oars, and after securing the weight to the hammock-clews, the men raised the body, and when I had offered a short prayer, lowered it into the water and let it go.

So this was the end of poor Sinnet, and now there were but three men to work the brig across the ocean when the time should come to sail.

On gaining the brig I went into the store-room with a light to see if any water had leaked in during the night. The deck was damp, sufficiently so to prove that some water

had crept in under the bulkheads; so, whilst Nelly prepared the breakfast, we brought out the bags of bread, the flour, sugar, and whatever else could take injury from water, and got them in the sun on the main-deck, and thoroughly dried the store-room floor, and with some of the planks which were still knocking about we made a raised floor, and stowed our provisions on it.

This brought us to nearly half-past seven, by which time breakfast was ready. We took our seats at the cabin table sadly, and spoke but little. There were but four of us now, and yesterday there had been five. I thought of his rough brown face, his respectful air to Nelly, his manly, simple manners, the songs he sung last night, and the figure of him as he sat clasping his temples, with the water in a pool at his elbows, trembling under his death-blow.

“Men,” said I, “our work to-day will be this: there are eight feet of water in the hold, and the first thing we must do is to pump it out. I should like to be able to come across some pitch to serve the oakum, and when the water is out of

her we must give her bottom another good overhaul. When this is done there will be nothing else to detain us. Valparaiso is our nearest port, and I shall make for it. As well as I can judge we are about fifteen hundred miles to the westward of that place, and the trades should carry us there on a bowline in a fortnight, if this brig sails as well as she promises. We're under-manned, my lads—there's no mistake about that—and for this reason I shall keep the royal and top-gallant yards on deck. The one really bad look-out is, I've got no sextant aboard, and I can't swear to within twenty miles of where we are. However, when we get to sea we must keep a bright look-out for ships, and if they can't lend us any men, they'll give us their reckonings, and so we must hope for the best and go to work."

So saying, and with a smile at Nelly, I left the table, and the men following me, we tailed on to the pumps, and there we stuck.

Pumping is the hardest work aboard ship; no labour wearies sooner nor ex-

hausts a man more completely. In order to sustain our strength we pumped two at a time, the third man stepping in every ten minutes, and this arrangement enabled us to keep the pumps going pretty briskly. When we knocked off for dinner there were only two feet of water left in her, and looking over the side I noticed that the line of her metal sheathing was only an inch or two below the water. We gave a half hour to our dinner, and then turned to again, and, pumping with great energy, at three o'clock the pumps sucked, or, to state the fact in less nautical language, we had pumped all the water out of her.

Exhausted as we were, yet the hollow sound of the sucker in the pump so inspirited us, that we could not help uttering a cheer; but the task had proved heavier than we had imagined it: our shirts were soaked with perspiration, and unable to stand, we flung ourselves on to the deck under the shadow of the cabin, and lay there panting like wounded dogs.

A pannikin of rum and water and twenty minutes' rest gave us back our strength,

and calling to Matthews to light the cabin lamp and follow me, I went into the brig's fore-castle to search the fore-peak for the pitch I wanted.

A landsman would have found himself in a rather large cabin, shaped to the form of the bows of the vessel, with half a dozen bunks in it, and a couple of hammocks, a saturated floor, a ceiling supported by stout beams, with a few odds and ends of things stranded in corners, the whole smelling strongly of salt-water. But for a sailor's eye the place had a most pathetic significance. As the explorer of a buried city, like Nineveh or Pompeii, muses with a certain melancholy over some relic of a human activity that was arrested on a sudden by the doom of the place, so would a sailor have dwelt with sorrowful interest upon the interior of this little brig's fore-castle, that offered a hundred signs of human life which had hastily fled from the death of the sinking hull. I have already spoken of the effect the sight of the hammocks had produced in me when I caught a glimpse of them hanging over the black

water that at that time half filled the fore-castle. There was no water now, and the damp dark planks of the deck exposed the memorials of the recent occupants of that drowned and chill and silent abode. In one corner was a seaman's bag, looking like a pulp of brown paper; in another corner a chest, with the yawning lid disgorging the contents. Here a broken pipe, there the fore-castle lamp, yonder a blanket, a coat, a cap, an old boot. I walked around this fore-castle with a feeling of awe. A few hours ago it was as completely drowned as if it had been at the bottom of the sea; and now here it was, empty again of water, full of grim relics, of signs of vanished human existence; the beam from which the lamp had swung still black, names carved in rude letters on the bunks, the hammocks swinging and arched, as though men were lying in them, a drowned Bible near the ladder, a sheath-knife close beside it, a pair of sea-boots hanging to a nail.

Armed with the lamp, I descended into the fore-peak, and amid hawsers, spare sails, coils of rope, barrels of tar, tins of paint.

and oil, and I know not what else, I lighted on a pitch-kettle full of pitch as hard as rock, and with a dead rat afloat in the water over the pitch. I handed up the kettle to Matthews, and gained the deck, glad to get into the sunshine, and out of the drowned salt smell of the hold and fore-castle.

Having set the pitch-kettle on to boil, we got the short stage over the side, and made such a job of the leak as any shipwright might have been proud of. The boat was then hauled alongside; Matthews and I jumped into her, and we once more thoroughly inspected the vessel, from her cutwater to her stern-post. Nay, so extraordinarily clear was the water, in consequence of its flowing over a hard white bottom, that we could see a great deal of the brig's copper, and fore and aft the hull looked as new, sound, and clean as if she had just come out of dock.

Now that the water was out of her, and she was afloat no deeper than her water-line, I shoved the boat off a little way to have a look at her; and there she lay, one

of the prettiest models I had ever seen, evidently as buoyant as a cork, and capable of sailing like a witch, if her lovely run, and the fine incurving of her bows, were not greatly deceiving. Aloft her beauty was indeed ruined by the condition of her fore-topmast. However, I had made up my mind not to improve nor alter our jury-rig. As it was, we should be able to carry more sail than we had hands to manage should it come on to blow suddenly.

By the time we had gained the brig it was five o'clock. Johnson was helping Nelly to get the tea. I found that whilst we were in the boat he had opened the main hatch; and on either side, with the bung-holes almost flush with the coamings of the hatch, and built in with the cargo of pines, were two great water-casks, one very nearly empty, and one quite full. I tasted the water, and found it perfectly sweet. So this water, and the water in the casks on deck, made such an abundance that the prospect of even a six months' voyage would not have given me any uneasiness on the score of our water supply.

The sight of these casks made me wonder whether there were any provisions aboard besides those in the store-room; and as supper was not yet ready, Matthews and I took the lamp, and went down the after-hatch into the lazarette—a small divided portion of the hold right aft, that corresponds with the fore-peak in the bows—and here we found several barrels of flour, pork and beef, many tins of preserved meat and potatoes; in short, nearly ten times the quantity of provisions which were in the store-room. The liberal manner in which this brig was victualled satisfied me that the captain had meant to push his voyage further than the port that was named in his manifest. However, when we examined the biscuit bags we found the contents to be just a mass of pure pulp. I expected that most of the flour also was destroyed by the water; but we were too tired to break these provisions out and examine them; indeed, we stood in no need of any portion of them unless it were the salt beef, and so we left them as we found them, and came away, having now explored every accessible part of the brig.

When we entered the deck-house we found supper ready. Nelly was in the chair she usually occupied, and I sat myself down next her. The men were at the other end of the table, and talked together, and I heard Johnson mention Sinnet's name, and speak as though he were ashamed of the fear he had shown of approaching the body of his old shipmate.

I told Nelly what I had been doing over the brig's side and down below, and we talked together in low tones of the sufferings we had gone through, the boatswain's death, Mr. Thomas and the people who had left the *Waldershare*, our present position, and our prospects of release. If it had not been that the hollows under her eyes were a little dark, there would have been no signs in her face, as there were certainly none in her manner, of the severity of her trials, and the terrible discomfort and long hours of anxiety she had gone through.

"How is it, Nelly," I exclaimed, "that a delicate girl like you, who have never before experienced anything resembling the hardships you have been enduring since the

Waldershare struck, bears up so marvelously well? Do you know that your eyes are as bright as ever they were in your happiest moods at Burmarsh? Your complexion is full of health; your voice, and the way you trot about, prove that you have not lost a jot of your strength. Why, those two men there have not half your courage and vigour."

"Only remember," said she, with her soft smile, "that you are with me, and every wonder is explained."

I seized and pressed her hand under the table. "I believe that, Nell; I believe it from my heart. I *do* know that I have your perfect love, my little sweetheart. But still, your strength and courage are wonderful. After this no one shall ever dare tell me that women cannot endure suffering and anxiety better than men."

We then talked of Phœbe and Councillor Johnson, and what a job it would be to make them believe our story.

"But this is your last voyage, Nell, mind!" said I.

"We shall see, Will," she answered, laughing.

A tell-tale compass hung just over the head of the table. I lay back after she had made that answer with my eyes fixed upon the compass, and my mind full of her, and Burmarsh, and the difficulty I should find in navigating the brig without a sextant. It was this compass, perhaps, that put these last thoughts into my head; and it did then occur to me that this tell-tale did not exactly correspond with the binnacle compass. Possibly I had noticed a discrepancy before, without giving it any heed; now, thinking over the difficulty of navigating the brig by dead reckoning from a point of departure whose accuracy could not be depended on, the importance that my compasses should be right, or that I should have some idea of their variation, struck me.

I called to Johnson, who in some respects was a shrewder man than Matthews.

“Step on deck and let me know exactly how the brig’s head lies. Sing it out, for the tide sheers her a trifle now and again.”

He left the table. Presently he shouted, “Can you hear me, sir?”

“ Ay, ay.”

“ North half west.”

Now, the tell-tale indicated north by east. A deviation of a point and a half was a mighty serious thing, and in our case it would be peculiarly so, as the port I meant to steer for was Valparaiso, and it was of great consequence, seeing that we had but three men to work the brig, that we should keep to windward of that town, that is, to the southward of it. The question, therefore, to ascertain was, which of the two compasses was right? The presence of local attraction might account for the deviation, or one compass must be radically defective. The shortest way of proving them was to carry them ashore, clear of any local influence in the vessel, and observe their indications there. The sun would not be setting for another two hours, there was every promise of a still and beautiful night, and right overhead was the new moon, like the rim of a circle of ground glass let into the rich blue of the sky. What little wind there was, was about E.S.E., just the wind we required to clear the creek, and I resolved,

before I observed the indications of the compasses ashore, to warp the brig's head round and start for the open sea.

"What say, my lads!" I exclaimed, after fetching a screw-driver to unscrew the tell-tale compass from the beam; "shall we get under weigh to-night? Now that the brig is tight and afloat, the sooner we put these rocks astern the better."

"Ay, ay," they cried, "let us get away, sir. We've had quite enough of this island."

"Right you are," I replied. "We found a free channel when we came up, so should it fall dark before we get away, the gloom needn't hinder us, as the stars, with that bit of moon yonder, should give us light enough to keep the brig in the middle of the creek. It may come on to blow to-morrow from the south'ard and stop us, but this is a breeze to carry us out, soft as wax, and just enough to set us steadily. So, my lads, as we're all agreed, we'll turn to and get some of our warps inboard before I take the compasses ashore. Johnson, bear a hand and get the boat alongside."

The reader will remember that I had moored the brig by five warps, one on either bow, one on either quarter, and one from the port gangway. In order to get her head round, for she lay with her head up the creek, I proposed to pass the end of the amidship warp forward, and the end of the starboard bow warp aft, letting go the other warps and coiling them down. By taking the ends of the standing warps to the winch we should slue the brig round on her heel. The shore ends of these warps were made fast to the spare booms lashed to the rocks, but as these booms were heavy spars, and would take us a good while to tow them alongside, and sway them in-board, I determined to leave them where they were. Accordingly Johnson shoved the boat ashore, and let go those warps for which we had no use, and then returned. The end of the port midship warp was carried forward and taken to the capstan, and so light was the brig, there being no tide, and not enough wind to influence her aloft, that by running the capstan round and then hauling taut on the starboard

quarter warp, in ten minutes' time the brig lay with her head pointing down the creek, held by a single stern warp.

I then told the men to go aloft and get the fore and main topsail loosed, ready for setting, and taking the compass out of the binnacle and stowing it in the boat along with the tell-tale compass, I sculled ashore. Having secured the boat by jamming the end of the painter under a lump of rock, I walked for about twenty yards up the slope, and finding a flat rock, set the two compasses down with the lubber's points exactly parallel, and waited until their traversing was done. The cards were so delicately hung, that a couple of minutes passed before they had done vibrating. I then found that when the binnacle compass showed an exact south against the lubber's point, the other showed south three-quarters west.

This puzzled me a good deal; for whereas on board the variation was a point and a half, here it was only three-quarters of a point. After musing awhile, and shifting the compasses several times, I formed the

conclusion that it was the tell-tale that was out ; yet this was but a guess, and I might have been wrong too, but still it was my belief, and so I resolved to navigate the brig by the deck compass.

I was still pondering and shifting the compasses when I was startled by a cry of "Sail ho !" and looking towards the brig I saw one of the men in the cross-trees beckoning to me and pointing. I ran towards the water where my boat lay, the better to hear him, and called to know what he saw.

"There's a big ship down away yonder !" he roared out. "Come aboard, sir ; you can't see her where you are."

Thinking he meant that I should not be able to see her from any part of the island, and rendered desperately excited by the news that there was a big ship in sight, I jumped headlong into the boat, every thought but the ship ! the ship ! going out of my head. Meanwhile Matthews had shinned up the fore-topmast and was bawling out that he could see her, that she was a big ship, and urging me to make haste.

On reaching the brig I made fast the boat's painter and scrambled aboard, and seizing the glass, I sprang into the rigging, and the moment I was in the top and could see the ocean away over the western rocks, I beheld the ship.

I levelled the glass and looked at her. She was not above six miles off, and her hull was therefore entirely visible. The sun was setting astern of her, and her sails on this side were in shadow; but the glass brought her quite close, and I saw that she was a ship of at least fifteen hundred tons, going full on the starboard tack and heading north. She was a whole cloud of canvas, everything being set, from her courses to her skysails. She was a merchantman, but she looked like a frigate, with her row of painted ports, her heavy spars, great hoist of topsails, and long jibbooms.

I was driven half wild by the sight of her; for although I should not have left this valuable little brig to rot among these rocks, yet, if the ship should not be able to lend me some men, I could put Nelly aboard of her, and borrow a sextant and

time my chronometers; and any way I was mad in my anxiety that she should sight us. She moved slowly, for the breeze was light, just sufficient to keep her lighter sails full; she made a lovely picture down in the north-west, with the sunlight reddening the ocean on which she floated, and her canvas all in soft shadow. I thought to myself, surely every glass aboard of her will be levelled at these rocks, and they cannot fail to see the masts of the brig towering above the little island.

But then, I also thought, how would they be able to guess that we were in distress? I shouted to Matthews to come down and bend on the ensign upside down, and hoist it as far as the main top-gallant masthead. This was done, but the flag was damp, and there was scarcely enough wind to float it out. I watched the ship to see if she observed this signal, but not a brace was touched aboard of her, nor did she alter her course a point.

"Johnson," I cried (he was in the cross-trees above me), "we must make a flare. We can't let her go. Lay down smartly."

We both gained the deck, and Matthews joining us, we all three went to the carpenter's chest, seized each man a hatchet and a saw, and fell tooth and nail upon the planks which lay about the deck. Whilst we were at this work I explained to the men that there would not be the least use in making a flare in the brig, as the rocks would prevent the ship from seeing it, and we should have to depend on the light, for it would soon be too dark for any smoke to show. I therefore said we must build up a fire on the west rock that looked directly out to sea, and I goaded them into great efforts by exclaiming that this might be our last chance, that my dead reckoning might end in stranding us, whereas, if we could signal this ship, we might not only get hands to work the brig, but all other help we needed.

As fast as we chopped the wood we threw it into the boat, until we had a load; we then shoved ashore, and, working with a will, we in a very short time transported as much wood as would make a large fire to the top of the rock and fired it. I

remained, with the glass, by the fire to watch it and the ship too, and sent the men back to the brig for more wood, telling them not to stay to chop it, but to bring it off in large pieces, as the fire had soon become fierce enough to kindle a forest of green wood.

It was assuredly our misfortune that the breeze should freshen a bit whilst we were at work with the fire. I did not feel the air where I stood, for I was protected by the north and east sides of the island; but I not only noticed that after the smoke from the fire had reached a certain height it was blown off in a curl like the top of a feather, but that the ship was feeling the breeze and was sloping her spars under it.

As I stood watching her through the glass, so excited and engrossed with the hope of detecting some movement in the ship as scarcely to feel the heat of the fire, it struck me that if they saw this smoke and flame they would imagine the island was a volcano, and in that belief pass on without giving it further attention. No one who has not suffered a like experience

can imagine the poignancy of the despair that possesses men who witness their salvation within reach, but whose wildest efforts are useless to come at it. It was true that I was master of a sound little brig, that we had plenty of water and provisions, and that, in comparison with the sufferings castaways have undergone, we were most happily and fortunately situated; yet no sense of the Providence that had watched over us could comfort me or abate my anger and grief as I watched the ship sailing on, for I was beyond expression anxious to obtain the help of men, and certainly the loan of a sextant.

The sun was now very near his setting, and the passage of the ship was marked by the distance she had left the sinking sun behind. The men were moving with a weary air towards the boat for a further supply of wood, when I ran after them.

"Either they *won't* see the light or they mistake its character," I said; "our plan, therefore, is to follow them. So let us get the brig under weigh immediately. They may heave to when they see us with our flag half-mast."

The men agreed that it was the best thing I could do, and, indeed, I regretted that the idea had not occurred to me before I lost time in kindling the fire. However, it was not too late yet; the brig had been warped ready to sail out of the creek, and although it was true that the sun would be gone before we should fetch the open sea, yet I hoped to be able to attract the attention of the people on the ship by hoisting and lowering the green lantern and burning a flare on the brig's forecastle.

The gaskets were off the yard-arms of the topsails, and Johnson and Matthews jumped aloft to loose the bunts. We had both boats in the water, but that could not be helped, for there was no time to hoist them; nor did it matter, as we could tow one astern and one alongside until we were clear of the creek. As soon as the men had let fall the sails, they came down, and we sheeted home and hoisted the yards. We then ran up the fore-topmast staysail, and the brig strained at the solitary warp that held her. There was a nice wind blowing; it blew straight down the creek, and the

topsails rounded under it, though on deck there was but little air to be felt. But by this time half the sun was under water, and in a minute or two we should have no better light than the red flush in the sky to guide us along the creek.

I let go the warp and grasped the wheel, calling to the men to get the foresail set. There was just a faint trickle of tide running seawards. That and the breeze gave the brig way a moment after the warp splashed astern. The great rock that had fallen during the gale receded, and the shore on either hand slipped past, darkening quickly under the gathering shadows. I could hear the water gurgling under the counter, and as we rounded the bend of the creek, the brig's sails and rigging stood out against the throbbing, blood-red glare of the sunset.

The bonfire still blazed fiercely on the little headland, and all the time that we were going down the creek I was praying that the ship had observed the character of the fire and that we should find her hove to. By this time the men had got the foresail set, and as we felt the breeze

stronger as we drew away from the lee of the north-east rocks, we were fast nearing the mouth of the creek, when, happening to cast my eyes upon the binnacle, at which I had never once thought of looking before, I uttered a cry that brought the men running aft.

“My God!” I cried, stamping my foot with bitter vexation, “I have left the compasses ashore!”

What a fatality! what an oversight! It was enough to make a man fling himself down on the deck and give up. And yet it was easily accounted for, too; for my thoughts had been completely carried away from the compasses by the cry that a ship was in sight, and then by the excitement of making a flare and watching the ship, and the hurry and business of getting under weigh.

But it was my fault. I had brought this new annoyance upon us, and I must decide how to act.

The westernmost point of the starboard rock was now on our quarter, and the sea lay in view, and away yonder in the north

was the pale glimmering shape of the ship standing steadily on and passing away rapidly, with just a tinge of red upon her upper sails, while between her and us was the blazing fire on the low headland tossing long flames across the sea and glowing ruddily in the swell that washed the side of the rock.

My resolution was instantly formed.

"We cannot put to sea without the compasses," I exclaimed. "Better lose yonder ship than act like madmen. So turn to at once and back the mainyards;" and at the same moment I put the helm down, and, giving the wheel to Nelly to hold, jumped forward and let go the starboard main-braces.

The brig lay with her head at south, and the mouth of the creek on our port beam. I ordered the men into the boat alongside, and told them to pull as hard as they could ashore, hurriedly describing to them the position of the compasses, and advising them to pull up the creek and land opposite where the brig had lain, as the compasses stood but a short walk from the shore there.

My heart smote me for my miserable forgetfulness when I saw the two weary fellows drop into the boat and row towards the shore. They went without a murmur. Nelly, seeing how downcast I was, tried to cheer me up by saying that my leaving the compasses was a pure accident, that it would not take the men long to bring them aboard, and that, as to the ship, there had been but small chance of our being able to keep her in view all night; "and," said she, "why do you suppose they would pay more attention to a bonfire kindled on this vessel than to those flames there?" pointing to the fire that was glowing with a brilliant ruddiness on the island. There was good sense in that; but I had set my heart on signalling the ship, and though I do not say that I should have succeeded in calling their attention to us, yet at that time I believed I should have succeeded, and I was driven mad to think that my hopes should be baulked by my cursed stupidity.

No sooner was the flush gone out of the west than the darkness fell; the silver streak of new moon shone with exquisite brilliancy,

and the sheen of the stars filled the long swell, over which the brig rose and sank, with green and rose-coloured lights like the flashings of diamonds. The boat had rounded the point of the long southern reef; but she was a heavy boat, the men weary; moreover, the ebb-tide would now be strong, and the breeze was right in their teeth. I knew their progress was slow by the lasting sound of the grinding of the oars that the breeze and the smooth water rendered marvellously distinct, although by this time the current and the wind had set us fully a third of a mile to the south-west of the island.

Looking presently in the direction of the ship, it furnished me with a sort of consolation to discover that she was passing away very fast. Indeed, as we could carry nothing above our topsails, it was not to be questioned that she would have sunk us and any flare we could have raised below the horizon long before the dawn broke; but I had been too excited with the hope of making ourselves seen by her to speculate on our chances of being able to chase her. Moreover, she had

got the full strength of the breeze, whilst we had lost time in getting out of the creek. Still, although I was beginning to fancy that our pursuit might have proved an idle one, I could not forgive myself for getting under weigh without the compasses.

The boat had now been gone a quarter of an hour. It was not so dark but that I could see the outline of the island against the stars; but the gloom was too great to enable me to determine the rocks at the mouth of the creek, and the steady glow of the bonfire also helped to perplex the view. As we were drifting apace, I left Nelly to hold the wheel, and lighted the green lantern and hung it in the main-rigging, so that the men should be able to pull straight for the brig.

"I hope," said I, "they will have no trouble in finding the compasses. My directions were clear enough."

"You will be hearing the oars in a minute or two, Will," Nelly answered.

I kept my eyes fastened on that part of the island where the mouth of the creek lay, and my ears straining. They had now

been gone over twenty minutes, and how far and how fast we had drifted it was hard to guess, but I thought that the island looked but a little rock in the gloom, and the fire but a spark, and I was worried to see the land becoming so small.

“Hark!” cried Nelly. “One of the men is calling.”

I listened, and in a few moments heard a faint hail. I ran into the bows of the brig, and hollowing my hands, shouted back at the top of my voice, and then put my hand to my ear and in that posture stood listening.

This time the return sound made me fancy they both hailed together. I called to Nelly to leave the wheel and come forward, believing that her hearing might be sharper than mine; but though the voices of the men were several times raised, they grew fainter and fainter, and neither Nelly nor I could distinguish the least meaning in the cries.

“Why, what could have happened to them?” I cried, utterly aghast. “Why do not they put off and come aboard?”

They must know that I am powerless here, and if they are not quick we shall lose sight of the island."

"Could they have met with an accident, do you think?" exclaimed Nelly in a startled voice; for her experience was now so great that she could realize as fully as I, not only the horror of those men left ashore on a naked rock without food or water, but our own great peril in being on a vessel without a compass to steer her by, and without men to handle her.

I ran for the glass, but it merely magnified the island without exposing its features. We stood straining our eyes and listening. Once the sound of the men's voices reached us in a thin, reedy cry, but so faint it was more like a little freak of fancy than a real sound.

I racked my imagination to conceive what had happened. That the men were alive was proved by their voices. Had their boat drifted away from them whilst they hunted for the compasses? What was to be done? Single-handed I could no more have worked the brig to windward

than I could have towed her. The other boat lay astern of us; but, even could I have pulled a pair of oars against this breeze, it was not to be supposed that I could run the risk of leaving the brig drifting away with Nelly alone aboard of her.

So far, God knows, our troubles had been unexpected enough, of a character that no foresight could have provided against; but here was a misfortune outweighing all others, in the suddenness of its occurrence and the severity of its character. Bad as it was for Nelly and me to find ourselves alone on the brig, yet the thought of the men being left on that island without food or water, with nothing but the hard rocks to lie on, was so terrible, that the full perception of their situation struck me, I may say, motionless. With what agony would they watch the green light fading in the distance! They would know, whilst the breeze held, that it was beyond my power to reach them, and they would also know that, should I lose sight of the island, the chances were a thousand

to one against my being able to fetch it again, having no compass to take its bearings with.

What a death to die! What hours of misery and madness before death should come! What a blow to befall us on the very eve of our departure, at a moment when the chances of our ultimate salvation were all in our favour!

I groaned aloud, and threw myself down on the deck, so crushed, so broken-spirited, so miserable, that I verily believe for some moments I was the unhappiest wretch in the whole world. I was recalled to myself by Nelly throwing her arms round my neck.

“Have heart, my beloved!” she cried; “have faith, Will! Do you believe that God has forsaken us?”

“Nelly, it is not of ourselves that I am thinking, but of those poor fellows left without food and water on that island!” I answered.

“But still, darling, is their position worse than it was in the open boat? There were four of us then, and we had no water nor food, and yet we were saved.”

“ But how can we save those men ? Every minute takes us further away from them.” I rose to my feet and exclaimed, “ See ! the shadow of the island is barely visible ; in a few minutes it will have vanished. Oh, Nelly, Nelly, this is the cruellest blow of all ! ”

She was silent, but her brave and noble confidence in God triumphed.

“ Will, we must believe in our Father’s mercy. Have courage, my dearest one ! ” she cried again, clasping my neck. “ In all your trials your courage has never left you ; be true to yourself, Will, now when courage and patience are most needed ! ”

It was impossible to listen to her sweet, loving, cordial voice and not feel the inspiration of it. I kissed her tenderly, but made no answer, and stood with my eyes straining towards the island, still hoping to hear the grind of the oars, or behold the shadow of the approaching boat. Thus we remained for ten minutes. I then went along the deck to the wheel, followed by Nelly.

CHAPTER V.

AT SEA AGAIN.

How it may be ashore I do not know, but the worst trials at sea are those in which a man looks around and finds that he can do nothing. The most dreadful peril may be mitigated for the time by the mere effort to escape it, worthless as those efforts may prove; but pure helplessness makes a comparatively small danger far more unbearable to a sailor than a great danger in which he can act. Neither we in the brig nor the men left on the island could be said to be in immediate peril, but the sense of our and their situation, owing to my helplessness to remedy it in any way, lay sharper in my mind than had any feeling of peril before experienced.

Here we were drifting away bodily, and there was no help for it. I might, perhaps,

have made shift to brace up the mainyards; but suppose I had filled and stood on, I had no compass to tell me where I was going. The island, lying low, was already buried in the gloom, and its situation was barely denoted by the bonfire that was now no bigger than a firefly on the sea, and the chance of missing it, and, if once missed, of missing it for good, was so great, if I got way upon the brig, that I felt, by allowing the vessel to forge through the water, I should be losing the only chance that remained of rescuing the men; and that chance was a shift of wind.

On calculating how long it would take the brig to drift to such a distance that the island should be out of sight from the cross-trees, assuming the horizon to be clear, I made the time about six hours, taking, of course, the same strength of wind that now blew, and no tide. This consideration gave me no hope, for I dared not believe that the wind would not freshen. But looking aloft I thought, "Why, what a fool I am to leave this sail on her!" for, to be sure, the drift of the brig would necessarily be rapid in

proportion to the canvas she exposed. I immediately ran forward and let go the topsail halliards, and bringing the clewlines and buntlines to the winch I managed to clew up both sails. I also diminished the spread of the foresail by taking the clew-garnets to the capstan, by which reduction of canvas I greatly diminished the drift of the brig. And now nothing remained but to wait for a shift of wind.

Never before were two sweethearts cast together in so solemn and tremendous a solitude as that in which Nelly and I found ourselves placed. The mystery and immensity of the deep, on whose long-drawn heavings the little brig sank and rose, were both expressed and defined by the brilliant stars which girdled the horizon. There was no need to hold the wheel; the vessel lay broadside on to the breeze and required no steering; and we sat side by side on the little grating, under which were the tiller-chains, talking in low voices, and listening to the wash of the water around the hull.

Clear as was the night, yet it yielded me no great hope, for I could not but remember

that the desperate gale that had blown the *Waldershare* into these latitudes had raged under a sky as brilliant by night as that which now hung over us. I was haunted by the thought of the two men on the island, and fancy gave my feelings a new edge by imagining the faces of the sailors as they gazed into the dark horizon, and I pictured them squatting on the hard rocks, and feeling athirst from the very knowledge that no water was to be had, and wondering whether the brig would be in sight when daylight broke, and if not, asking one another what they should do, until my fancy was like to drive me mad. I know not why it was that I should have thought so much of them, and so little of us who were on the brig, unless I was driven to it by considering that the men were without food and water, and my recollection of the uncomplaining way in which they rowed from the brig on an errand of which my forgetfulness was the wretched occasion.

But the breeze was very gentle, and I had little doubt, now that the spread of canvas had been diminished, that the brig's

drift was small. This eased my mind somewhat; for surely, if this wind did not increase I might hope it would go, and with any other wind that was not too violent I should be able to keep the island in sight, if not to fetch the creek again.

I talked a great deal to Nelly about Mr. Thomas, and the chances of the people in the long-boat, the thought of them being put into my head by the gloom of the night, and the loneliness of our situation. She asked me if I thought there was any possibility of their having reached land; but I answered no, remembering that the wind that was blowing when the *Waldershare* struck would drive them to the westwards, where there was no land for hundreds of miles, so that their only chance of being saved was by a ship.

My head ached a little, and I laid it upon her shoulder, and whilst she was talking to me as I lay in that posture, I fell asleep. She let me sleep thus for two hours, never once moving, for fear that she should awaken me; indeed, had I not awoke by myself, she would have held me asleep all

night. On opening my eyes I stared about me, thinking at first that we were in the creek, and I looked for the island; but when my memory returned, and I found what time it was, and that I had kept Nelly supporting me for above two hours, I was too angry with my own selfishness for some time even to thank her. Then, taking her in my arms, I said, "Nelly, what should I have done without your companionship? We have been so wonderfully watched over and kept together that it looks as though it were God's will that you should have undertaken this voyage. I pray—I pray, my darling, that our lives may be spared, if only that I may repay you by my love for the sufferings you have endured for your love for me."

It was now twenty minutes before midnight. The sleep I had taken had set me up for the remainder of the night. No doubt I should have been the better for another four hours' rest, but I was a sailor, and with sailors a short sleep goes a long way. All this time there was no light in the cabin, though the green lantern hung in

the rigging. I trimmed and lighted the cabin lamp, and got wine and biscuit and cold beef, and made Nelly eat some supper. I drank some wine, but could eat nothing. When I looked at the food and the wine, I would have given ten years of my life to feel that the men on the island were provided for.

I told Nelly that when she had finished her supper she must lie down and take some rest, and whilst she was eating I talked as briskly as I could, spoke of reaching the island next morning, and of fetching the port of Valparaiso in a fortnight, my wish being to calm and reassure her mind so that she might be able to sleep when she lay down. She tried to get me to promise to call her at the end of two hours, so that she could keep watch whilst I slept.

"I'll see about that, Nelly," I replied. "Meanwhile, get you to your berth; for there are but two of us to work the brig, and if your strength fails there will be but one."

This was the best argument I could have used to induce my lion-hearted girl to lie

down. So, giving me a kiss, away she went with a smile to her little cabin, and I stepped on deck.

Although I had been but a week on this brig, it seemed as if whole months had elapsed since I first boarded her. Every hour that had passed since that time was so cramful of incident, excitement, and feeling, it seemed incredible so much should have taken place in so short a time. I contrasted my situation now with what it had been when I was alone on the waterlogged hull, and though it was improved, yet I felt with bitterness that the improvement bore but a miserable correspondence with the labour, pain, and suffering which had been endured by me to come at the position in which I now was. I do not say that I should have felt the helplessness of being alone with Nelly so keenly had it not been for the two men left on the rock. Had I known that they could have found a lodging even in a cave or among trees, that there was a spring of water in the island, and any kind of food to be obtained, whether as fruit or fish, or that they had

been rescued by a vessel after I had lost sight of the island, I should have had more spirit to submit to this new trial of loneliness and peril that had come upon me and my sweetheart.

And yet, unless a sudden great change of fortune came, we on this brig were in such an evil and miserable plight as the very devil himself might not have malice enough to plan as a torment. First, I was without sextant and compass—I had no notion where I was, nor to what part of the ocean I might be blown; secondly, the yards and sails of the brig were so heavy that it was as much as three men could do to work them without excessive labour, and then only with the aid of the watch-tackle and the winch; thirdly, my companion was not a rough, hearty sailor, but a delicate woman, who, magnificent as was her courage, could give me out of her natural feebleness but little help, although, as she could steer, her services would have been valuable had I had the two men with me. Therefore, although I was better off than I had been

when on board this brig water-logged, seeing now that she was tight and buoyant, and that I had nothing to dread but a gale of wind, yet I was not so very much better off. The result was but a trifle compared with the labour we had gone through to arrive at it. It was like ploughing up and sowing an acre of land and getting but one small ear of corn out of it. In truth, it was enough to have sickened the heart of a wiser and braver man than I; and had it not been that Nelly's life was dependent on mine, or, in other words, had she not been in the brig with me, I should have prayed God to destroy me, so wearying to my brain was the sight of the dark, silent surface of water, so crushing the sense of hopelessness and helplessness excited by a survey of my situation and chances.

The wind still continued to blow very steadily, a soft gentle breeze. I took the log-reel to the quarter and paid the end out overboard. The log-ship was a cone-shaped canvas bag, and constructed by means of a peg to take a grip of the

water. It would be easy, therefore, to judge of the extent of the brig's drift by observing the speed at which the line went over the side. By this means I discovered that our drift did not exceed a mile an hour, and unless there was a current setting us to the southward I had a right to hope that the island would be plain in view from the foretop by daybreak, and for some time after. But then, what satisfaction would that be if this breeze held, or if it fell calm? It would be a maddening thing to have that island in view, perhaps, all day to-morrow, and then for the wind to spring up afresh and blow us away for good and all.

And yet it was a most lovely night, of a beauty that made our peril and that of our helpless shipmates left on the rock unreal to my imagination. The new moon was now well down in the west, and looked like a red scar on the sky; but the heavens were so full of stars that there did not appear room for a pin's head among the brilliant, remote dust under which the greater stars hung in tropical glory. The

breeze held the loose canvas steady, and there was nothing to be heard but the whispering of the wind among the rigging, and the peculiar hollow gurgle of the water as the long ocean swell came and went under the brig. Indeed, the silence in the vessel was extremely oppressive, and although there was no longer any fear of my being haunted by such superstitious fancies as had visited me during the second night of my being aboard the brig, yet when I thought of the crew who had been in her before ever I had known that she had an existence, and who were gone and, for all I knew, were drowned, and then of the boatswain's death, and of the men left on the island, and how unavailing all our efforts appeared to save ourselves and get away from this dreadful imprisonment, I could not prevent the fancy from seizing me that she was a doomed vessel, that a curse rested on her, and that her evil fate extended to every one who had anything to do with her. When I was alone on the brig my mind had got used to my solitude by the time the boat

containing Nelly and the others boarded me; now the habit of companionship had grown strong again, and every time I looked along the dark deck and thought if I should want help there was no one to call but Nelly, gave me a shock beyond any words I am master of to express. And then to look into the binnacle and find no compass and no light there, produced a sensation in me as though I had gone blind.

Indeed, when I began to think what I should do if I missed the island and found myself tossing on the great sea with a breeze blowing from some quarter I could only guess from the position of the sun, my mind was blank. There was, it was true, always the hope that we might sight a ship; but the disappointments I had been made to suffer in this respect made my faith in that chance of rescue small. And besides, the further we went to the south and west, the smaller grew the likelihood of our being sighted; and so our position in this brig, blown here and there by the winds, without a compass and

without any possible means of discovering our situation, would be like that of a blind man who loses his way on a great moor, and wanders around and around with outstretched hands, and not knowing which way his face looks.

I was too restless to sit, and yet so weary in heart and limb that walking pained me. I lighted a pipe of tobacco, believing the smoke would soothe me, and got upon the deck-house, where I passed a long time in gazing intently around the dark sea; though, God knows, had any man asked me what I expected to behold, I should have had no answer to give him.

Whilst I did not believe that the wind had veered, yet I could not be sure that it had not either; so, as the brig was sure to lie broadside to it, no matter whence it blew, then, whilst I believed the island lay out yonder, it might not be there at all, but astern or ahead; for as to my fixing its position by the stars, why, by this time they had made a long traverse of the sky, so that, unless the brig was still drifting with her port broadside to

the island, there was no telling on what part of the circle the rocks were, and the unhappy men upon them.

At about three o'clock in the morning the wind died quite out; I could not feel a breath of air even by wetting my finger and holding it up; my eyes were very heavy, and the fatigue of my body very great; yet when this dead calm fell I rallied like a man under an inspiring draught. To be sure, it might end in a heavy disappointment; it might leave us rolling in sight of the island, and then the northerly wind might spring up again and blow us away; but still, whilst the calm held there was a chance that the next breeze that came might enable us to fetch the island, and whilst the calm lasted and the island remained in view there was something for hope to feed on.

I had got upon the rail of the bulwark and was looking along the sea, wondering where the island now lay, when I felt a hand upon my back, and the touch of it breaking in upon the profound sense of loneliness that at that moment possessed

me so startled me that I was as near as possible falling overboard. It was Nelly, of course, who had come on deck unheard by me. She had looked at the chronometer, and reproached me for not having kept my promise to call her in two hours.

"No matter, dear," I exclaimed, getting on to the deck; "I should not be able to sleep were I to lie down. Do you notice that there is a dead calm? I am wild with impatience for daylight, to see if the island is in sight."

"We should have the dawn in about three quarters of an hour, Will."

"Yes, and God grant it brings a stern-wind for the island with it."

"I wish you would not fret and worry so much, Will," said she. "Do you know, your voice sounds so hollow and broken that I should hardly know it. I have already seen enough of the sea to understand that it is so full of chances a man ought never to give up hope."

"Ay, Nelly, you do well to put a stopper on me. But it is the thoughts of the men we have left which bother me. And then

I have not your courage, nor your faith either. Perhaps I should have more of both had our experiences tried my nerves less."

"You *have* been tried, my own, too much—too much!" she murmured with beautiful tenderness, laying her soft cheek against mine; "but the word end is not written yet. Here we are still alive, still preserved to one another, and the sun that is coming may bring us some happiness, Will. Why, an old sailor like you would not like to hear me boast to Phœbe that I was light-hearted when you were down-cast, and that the dangers of the sea scared you more than me."

Her manner of saying this would have made me smile, I do believe, though I had known I was to be drowned the next minute; and there was a little spice of wholesome truth in her words too.

"Why, Nell," said I, "I believe I am a bit of a cur after all."

"No, not that, Will; but you worry too much. You are too fond of foreboding. Come, lay your head on my shoulder and

sleep. I promise solemnly to awaken you at daybreak."

"If it were earlier by an hour I would humour you, but it will be daylight soon, and with the first streak of dawn I must be aloft with the glass."

"Then, at all events, sit down," said she, bringing a chair. "You move as if your limbs were made of lead." And then she brought me some brandy and water, and sat down alongside of me, nursing my hand, and talking to me with wonderful encouragement in her voice and words. Indeed, such was the art with which she cheered me; her liveliness, her conversation, her little laughs, were all so natural, that I never appreciated them as a pure effort of her noble and precious love until long afterwards, when I looked back and thought of her as she sat by my side, while the dew fell in showers out of the folds of the sails, and the tiller-chains clanked gently to the quiet movements of the little brig. She seemed so full of hope, her lightness appeared so real, she spoke with such confidence of our safe return to England, and

so distracted and amused my thoughts by picturing Phœbe's and the councillor's faces when she should tell them the story of our voyage—I say she acted her part to such perfection, that my spirits rose through sheer sympathy with her hopes and bright humorous fancies, and several times I caught myself laughing and agreeing with her that all would be well, and that our trials would make a fine tale for our friends to marvel over.

Whilst we thus sat talking, the dawn broke over the sea on the port quarter. I sprang from my chair and gazed earnestly at the faint ashen light.

“Yonder should be the east, Nell,” I cried; “and unless the breeze that drove us from the island veered during the night, our shipmates should be there!” and I pointed towards the dark sea on the starboard beam.

If my surmise were correct, then the brig had slewed right round, and her head was pointing in the exactly opposite direction to that in which we had hove her to. I took the glass and went into

the maintop in readiness to scan the horizon when the dawn brightened.

The daylight grew slowly; the sea below it turned grey and the stars sickened, though they glowed brightly in the west, where the shadow of night lay so dense that methought no light could ever pierce it. Presently the horizon became a dark uncertain outline in the north-west, and I pointed my glass; but I had to bridle my impatience. Soon came the pink herald of the rising sun, but it was not until the upper limb of the glorious orb threw a long, rosy, sparkling beam across the sea that the water-line grew a clear circle against the faint blue sky; and then I saw the island, looking no bigger than a ship's boat, down in the quarter where I had expected to find it. It was fully ten miles off, but still it was the island, and I shouted to Nelly that "there it was! there it was!" pointing as I called to her, though it was not to be seen from the deck.

"Yes, it is there, indeed," said I to her when I came down; "and in this clear air I should be able to see it from the masthead were it five miles further off."

I looked carefully around, but there was not the least sign of any breeze ; the sky was entirely cloudless, and of a most lovely brilliant blue, and the sea was as unblurred as a looking-glass ; and the reflection of the sun in the water was so polished and undisturbed, that my eyes filled with water as they passed over it, as though it had been the sun itself that dazzled me. I had little fear, however, that this calm would last very long ; we had met with so many hurricanes in these seas that my misgivings were all the other way ; all that I could earnestly hope for was that, should a breeze come, it would blow us toward the island, and that the weather would remain clear enough for me to keep the land in view.

Whilst Nelly went into the galley to light the fire and get us some breakfast, I walked forward, and hauled upon the jib-halliards until I had got the sail as high as my weight would raise it ; I then clapped the watch-tackle on, and by this means hoisted it a good bit higher ; and having done what I could I belayed, and applied myself to sheet home the topsails : for you

will remember that on the previous night I had let go everything and clewed up after a manner, so that the canvas hung in folds from the yards; therefore, if I waited for a breeze and one should come, it might be gone again before I could get sail upon the brig. The topsail sheets, being chain, rattled themselves very easily home, yard-arming themselves by their own weight. I also hoisted the main-staysail by means of the jigger, and then calling Nelly I clapped the jigger on to the fore-topsail halliards, and took the hauling part to the capstan, and after innumerable pauses in order to shift the jigger, I managed to masthead the yard. I am particular in stating this, as several persons have doubted my capacity of making sail upon that brig single-handed.

There now remained the main-topsail yard to hoist, but Nelly begged me to have some breakfast first, and as there was not so much as a shadow upon the sea, I consented to knock off work for awhile, and eat our breakfast on deck.

The tea refreshed us both very much, and we made a fairly good meal, though my

anxiety was so great that I was incessantly putting down my plate to stand and look around to see if any wind was coming.

When I had breakfasted I took the glass into the maintop to have another look at the island, and found it just in the same quarter where I had first sighted it, namely, dead on the starboard beam, proving that the brig had not shifted a point since day-break. There was a little swell, but not much; what there was came from the south-east, so it was neither favourable nor adverse. How the tide was, if there was any tide, I could not imagine. It comforted me to think that the men would be able to see the brig now that we had got the fore-topsail hoisted. They would be sure to know that the sail they saw was the brig and no other, for I might reckon the first thing they must search the sea for when the day broke would be the brig, and they would be sailors enough to guess that our drift during the darkness would correspond with the distance at which our sails were shining. So, whilst we remained in sight, their despair would not be acute,

though I dreaded the effects of the sun upon their thirst.

My next job was to get the main-topsail hoisted, and this I accomplished by the method I have already explained; but the yard being heavy, I could not hoist it another inch when the bolt-ropes were still slack. Yet here was a surface of sail that must impel the brig should any wind come, and nothing now remained but to sit down and wait for the wind.

We had our boat astern in the water, and I remember as I looked at it calculating how long it would take me to scull to the island; and I thought if this calm could be counted on to last until sunset it could be done; for I reckoned it would take me about six hours to fetch the island, and we could row the boat back in two hours and a half, making eight and a half hours during which I should be away from the brig.

I spoke to Nelly about this, but in the same breath I pointed out its madness; for if I went she should go too, as I would not leave her alone in the vessel, and when we were gone, then, if a breeze should spring

up, the brig would drift away and we should be in a frightful plight indeed, and the men worse off than they were now; for now they might hope we should rescue them, but if we lost the brig they must perish certainly, and we with them.

In talking and planning and hoping and gazing earnestly about us, two hours passed away. It was hard upon ten o'clock, and I had stepped into the cabin to compare my watch with the chronometer, when Nelly called out to me sharply and eagerly. I came running out to her, and found her standing upon a chair, holding to the rail of the deck-house with one hand, and pointing over the port quarter to the sea.

"Look, Will," cried she; "is not that dark shadow out there wind?"

I sprang on to the deck-house, and saw the water of a violet colour to the right of the great silver cone of light that the flaming sun cast in the sea. There were no clouds to make such a shadow, but as it was a long way off, and might be a current or some local disturbance for all I could tell, I stood watching it until the approach of

the dark line assured me that it was wind.

As nearly as I might judge from the position of the sun the breeze was coming from the eastwards, about E.S.E. I ran up into the top again to make sure of the bearings of the island, and observed that, if this breeze was coming up true, it would give us a beam wind to the island. This was a glorious piece of good fortune. I came down, keeping the bearings of the land in my mind by reference to the wind; and in about ten minutes after Nelly had called me the breeze was blowing gently around us, and the sails of the brig lifting.

I placed Nelly at the wheel, requiring her to keep it over until I called to her to steady it. The breeze had struck us with our head at south-west, but the moment the brig had way, she answered her helm like a fish, and as she brought the wind on her starboard beam, I let go the weather braces, and (the wind helping the yards) I managed, single-handed, to trim them very fairly. I then called out to Nelly to steady the helm. She perfectly understood the order, and revolved

the spokes so as to bring the tiller amidships; and, that we might make the most of this godsend of air—for we were now heading straight for the island—I took the foretack to the winch and hauled aft the sheet.

I was breathless with my exertions, and, I may say, fired with a transport of eagerness; for my impatience to gain the island and rescue the men urged and heated me like a fever. Besides, I could not know that this breeze would last, for it had no more strength than the one that had blown the night before, and hence I was in a kind of rage to draw near enough to the island to admit of my sculling the boat ashore, should the breeze fail.

I stood some moments catching my breath and looking over the stern at the boat, that wobbled and splashed prettily as she was towed.

“I shall go aloft forward, Nelly,” I said, “in order to keep the island in sight and direct you how to steer. I will come down the moment the rocks are visible from the deck.”

I was very tired, yet full of hope ; for the little brig was slipping over the water like a witch, giving splendid earnest of her sailing qualities when her canvas should be properly set and more of it exposed ; and, clambering on to the starboard bulwark just abaft the fore-rigging, I was in the act of grasping one of the jury-stays in order to swing myself into the shrouds, when my foot hooked itself under the rail. The impulse I had given myself threw my body awry, and I fell backwards and with a mighty splash overboard.

There is no kind of accident that flashes stranger thoughts into a man's mind than falling overboard into the sea—I mean for the moment, and while he is under water. I very well remember being quite conscious of what had happened, and yet thinking it was a dream ; that there was no reality in the drench and chill of the water whilst I was under it. I felt no fear nor wonder. A thousand thoughts swept through my brain during the few seconds the water was over my head ; but the instant I reached the surface and breathed I saw my position, and gave myself up for lost.

I was a tolerable swimmer, and that was all. Yet now I not only had my clothes on, but I was weary too, and the despair in me was so great—I was so sure my time had come—that it was a toss-up whether my instincts would set me swimming or whether my despair would make me throw up my hands and go. Happily, I had fallen on the broad of my back, or nearly so, and therefore had not sunk deep nor lost much breath, and the height from which I had tumbled not being more than eight feet, the fall had not hurt me.

About fifteen seconds elapsed from the moment of my fall to the moment of my emerging above the water. I closed my eyes to strain the salt out of them, and saw the brig sliding fast away from me; and then, as I have said, it was a toss-up whether I should sink or swim, for the desperate nature of my peril rushed into my brain with such speed that a painting of it could not have set every fact before me more suddenly and fully. I saw the brig going away fast. I believed that Nelly would be helpless, and I felt that my end had come

indeed. It was a moment of terrible agony. It was cruelly hard to perish in the very sight of my sweetheart, and to leave her utterly alone in the brig. I thought to myself, "If God would only let me rescue the men, so that they might work the brig for her, I would be content to drop dead;" but to die like a rat in the water, and to leave her to the mercy of the sea in a vessel that she could not control, was a thought dreadful enough to break my heart, as I lay in the water swimming, and to kill me in that way before the water had time to strangle me.

The vessel had not gone a hundred yards, though she looked to me to be a mile off, when I saw Nelly jump on to the taffrail, and a plank glanced from her hand and dropped into the sea. The swell heaving me aloft at that time, I could very easily see that the plank was a portion of one of the pines which we had sawn in pieces on the previous night for the bonfire on the island, and that it would be abundantly big enough to sustain my weight, could I reach it. Collecting all my strength and rallying all my spirits for

the effort, I struck out, swimming very steadily, and resolute to make no haste, lest I should weary myself; and, after swimming about twenty yards, I turned on my back and floated a little while, and then struck out afresh, the swell, as it threw me up, enabling me to keep the plank in view. But the longer I swam the greater grew the agony of the effort, for my clothes so weighed me down that I had the utmost difficulty to keep my mouth clear, and to accomplish this I had to strike the water downwards, a motion that made my progress very slow.

After turning a second time on my back, I found that it required as much movement with my arms to keep me in that posture, owing to the dead weight of my clothes, as it did when I breasted the water. The whole distance was not above a hundred yards, yet had it been a mile it could not have seemed more interminable nor the plank slower in coming at. When I was within thirty feet of it my strength began to fail me so fast that again I cried to myself that my time was come, that I had

better drown and make an end of this piteous struggle; but catching sight of Nelly waving her arms as she stood on the taffrail of the receding brig, I flung my whole fury into a last attempt, and with a mighty splashing of my hands and shooting of my feet, I came up to the plank, and flung my arms around it, so spent that nothing now saved me but the drowning tenacity of the grip I took of the plank.

Having recovered myself somewhat, I got the end of the plank under my breast. It was a stout piece of timber, about two and a half inches thick, and a foot wide, and about twelve feet long. More than the ordinary strength of Nelly must have gone to the throwing of it overboard; but the passion of love and despair has made women stronger than men, as can be proved by numerous instances.

Having slewed the plank, by working my left leg and hand, so as to enable me to see in the direction of the brig without shifting the posture of my body, I observed, what I had not before noticed, owing to the concentration of my attention on the plank,

that Nelly had let go the boat's painter, and that the boat was adrift about two hundred yards ahead of me. Thanking God for my sweetheart's marvellous presence of mind, I immediately applied myself to the task of reaching the boat. With great caution I managed to head the plank for the boat, and then fell to rowing with my hands as though they had been a pair of sculls. This was easy work, and I made good progress. The breeze gave the boat a slight drift, but nothing to speak of; yet it kept me working with desperation, for the further the boat drifted to leeward, the harder would be the job to scull her to windward. So by this time, it will be seen I had my wits about me; though, after all, I was calculating without my host, for had I raised my head, which I never thought of doing, being so intent upon reaching the boat, I should have seen that the brig was still heading away from me.

By dint of thrusting the plank along the water with my hands I reached the boat, but I was so utterly exhausted I could not stand, and tumbled into the bottom of the

boat like an empty bag; and there I lay, panting and panting, and trembling all over. However, thinking presently of the brig, and what was to become of Nelly, and of me too, if I did not catch the vessel, I got up and stood on one of the thwarts.

The brig was about two-thirds of a mile distant, and that she was not further off I attributed to her having come up into the wind when Nelly had left the wheel, although she was full now and increasing her distance. The form of Nelly was quite distinct, standing on the quarter holding on to the vang; indeed, the air was so marvellously transparent, and every detail of the vessel was so sharp, it was like looking at her through a telescope. It was impossible, however, to throw my voice so far, even had my weariness left me any pipe to sound withal; yet it was plain that Nelly did not know what to do, and taking my chance of her seeing and understanding my gestures, I several times waved my hand from left to right to signify to her to put the wheel that way. She left her place and I lost sight of her, and I believed that she

had gone to the wheel ; when, keeping my eyes fixed on the vessel, I saw Nelly once more on the quarter, but in an attitude that persuaded me she was looking at me through the glass. On this I gesticulated as before, acting the part of a man at the wheel, and using my arms so as to imitate the motion of turning the spokes. She again disappeared, and in a few moments the brig came up in the wind and lay all aback.

The oars in the boat were long and heavy, and I could not manage a pair of them ; so I threw one over the stern and began to scull, keeping the boat's head to leeward of the brig to meet her drift. The sun was terribly hot, and in spite of my soaking clothes, the heat seemed to scorch up my skin. The sense of the narrowness of my escape was now working upon me like a spell ; my mind was quite numbed ; my actions were wholly mechanical. Yet I believe this very condition helped to my safety by deadening me to any feeling of fatigue. My arms moved to and fro as I sculled the boat, and I worked like a clock-work figure, with almost as little sensibility.

Happily I had not the wind to contend with, for I was running along the side of it, so to speak, in order to meet the brig that was blowing slowly athwart my path. The salt water had got into my throat and bred an intolerable thirst; my eyes smarted painfully, and the fierce sun pouring down on my face and drying up the wet on my cheeks made them feel as though they were cracked and full of sores. I sometimes wondered, as I went on working the oar to and fro, whether my strength would not leave me all on a sudden, and what would follow if that were to happen; and there arose before me the picture of my lying senseless in the bottom of the boat, and the brig drifting slowly away with Nelly helpless and frantic aboard, and then my coming to and rising with difficulty and looking around and finding myself alone in the boat on the great sea. Yet, strangely enough, these thoughts did not then produce the impression that they now do upon me. I am not conscious that they nerved me to any greater efforts. Such was my mood at that time that had I fallen overboard

I should not have made the least struggle to save myself; so that had it not been for the mechanical instinct of preservation, or I should prefer to say, had it not been for the automatic movements of my arms, in which my intelligence bore not the slightest part that I can remember, I verily believe I should have sat me down in the bottom of the boat, and in that posture have fallen foolish and perished.

I brightened up a little, however, as I drew near the brig, and the figure, gestures, and the face, though not the features, of Nelly being perfectly distinct, something in the passionate manner in which she clasped her hands, and then in the piteous eagerness with which she beckoned me onwards, broke like a sunbeam through the cloud that filled and stupefied my brain. I felt the pathos of our trials, our long and bitter struggle with the sea; the thought of the men on the island smote me; I reflected how near I had been to death—how the very icy hand of death had been at my throat, and had been torn from me by a woman's love and courage. I say, all these fancies rushed

into my mind, and the scalding tears filled my eyes.

But it was a happy visitation of weakness ; it seemed to give me back my mind again. I looked at the brig with a new intelligence, and calling cheerily upon myself as I would have called to a companion to work with a will, I sculled with all my might, and at last ran the head of the boat against the side of the brig. At the moment the boat struck the brig Nelly let fall a coil of rope into her, to which I bent on the end of the painter, and catching hold of the laniards of the main rigging, I drew myself over the bulwarks and literally *rolled* inboards upon the deck.

Nelly's delight at having me again was one of the strangest, most moving sights that a lover's eyes had ever beheld in his sweetheart. She threw herself down on the deck and lifted my head on to her lap, and laughed, and wept, and kissed me, and wept again and again, passing her fingers through my hair to dry it, and talking to me in the most passionate, extravagant terms of endearment ; but would not let me speak,

closing my lips with her fingers if I offered to open them, and forcing me to rest whilst I listened to her transports, her prayers of gratitude over my deliverance, to her crying that she had me again, she had me again, and to her sobs, which broke away into hysteric laughter. When she saw I had my breath she rose and helped me on to my feet and took me to the cabin, where she got me some brandy and prepared me a change of clothes in the mate's berth, so that half an hour after I had reached the brig I was in dry clothes, invigorated by the brandy, well rested, and fit to apply myself to the work I had in hand before I interrupted it by falling overboard.

It was indeed time that I should give over thinking of myself. The breeze was as lively as I could wish it, and not too strong, but every minute the brig was driving further to leeward, so that if I was not sharp, instead of the bearings of the island making the breeze a beam one, I should bring it so far ahead as to prevent me from fetching the island by one board.

I went on deck, not very actively, as you

may believe, and finding the brig had stern-way I put the helm hard a-port. I then let go the starboard main-braces, flattened in the jib-sheet, and taking the port fore-braces to the winch got a drag upon them. In a few moments the brig filled forward and her head fell off. I then shifted the helm, and with Nelly's help braced up the mainyards, and then very cautiously, and in spite of Nelly's entreaties not to venture it, though it was an imperative necessity, I climbed up the main rigging, and when I was just under the top I saw the island bearing about a point on the lee bow.

I came down the rigging as cautiously as I had gone up it, and having taken the boat's painter aft so that she might tow clear astern, I turned to Nelly, who stood at the wheel. Her eyes were full of tears and her lips quivering, though she was biting them to restrain her emotion. Fearing the reaction from the terrible shock she had received, I kissed and soothed her, and bade her consider that my falling overboard was an adventure that constantly befell sailors, and I was doing my best to

make light of the accident, and protesting that I should be the better for my bath, when the sense of her devotion, her surprising courage, her presence of mind, the intelligence with which she had obeyed my signal to revolve the wheel, her judgment in throwing the plank overboard, and liberating the boat, burst upon me with the force of a revelation. I was struck dumb; I could only look at her without speaking, until a passion of gratitude and love fired me, and I kissed and fondled her, and every bit acted as extravagantly as she had when I tumbled on board over the side.

"Nelly," I said, when I had calmed myself down, "let me tell you that the most experienced sailor could not have done more than you did. Although I know you are as brave as a lion, I never should have dreamt you had such extraordinary presence of mind."

"And yet I should not have thought of stopping the brig if you had not signalled to me, Will. Indeed, I have not so much presence of mind as you fancy; for after I had let the boat go, I felt stupefied, and I

should have gone on sailing away from you to this moment had you not beckoned."

But then how was it possible that this girl, who had never been on a ship before she boarded the *Waldershare*, should know how to stop the progress of a vessel by a movement of the helm? I told her that the mere fact of her having watched my gestures through the glass proved that she was not so stupefied as she believed, and I asked her if the plank she had flung overboard was not very heavy?"

"I don't remember," she answered, smiling; "but I felt myself strong enough to throw a bigger plank than that into the sea." And here she described her feelings when she saw me fall and heard the splash of my body—how for a moment all her senses left her, then how she reasoned that if a plank were thrown to me I should be able to support myself, and how she rushed from the wheel and seized the first she saw, and carried it aft as though it were a book, and let it fall. She told me that her first idea had been to get into the boat, but that she saw, if she brought it alongside and got into

it, she would not be able to cast it adrift ; so she resolved to let it go, making sure that, if I could reach the plank, I should be able to reach the boat.

“Happy for me, Nell,” said I, “that you did not go into hysterics, or faint away, as some young ladies might have done, who in a drawing-room would think themselves very fine women.”

“Then they must mind and not have sailors for sweethearts,” she answered.

Meanwhile the brig, with just a little slope in her spars, was slipping along the water as fast as a man could run. I let Nelly steer in order that I might rest myself, as it was impossible for me to know what hard work lay before me yet, and I had not yet reaped any particular benefit from the shock of the fall overboard and the struggle in the water. So I made a pillow of a coil of rope under the shelter of the bulwark, and stretched my limbs along the deck, talking to Nelly and keeping my eye on the shadow of the mast upon the main-topsail ; for that was as good as a compass, and enabled me to see that Nelly kept the brig’s head straight.

The breeze made a pleasant sound overhead, and the splashing of the boat astern was wonderfully refreshing and soothing. Now and again as I looked at Nelly and thought of my escape, a shudder passed through me; but whether the accident was too recent to give my mind time to digest the significance of it, or whether I had expended all my immediate stock of emotion whilst I was overboard, or whether—and this is very likely—the sailor's careless indifference was triumphing as an old instinct now that I was safe, and the thing had happened and I was none the worse for the capsizal, my narrow escape did not then, nor afterwards, engage much of my attention except so far as it had reference to the part Nelly had played in it.

She was still very pale, but had regained her firmness, and stood at the wheel looking aloft, like a real sailor, to see that the sails were drawing, with eyes whose soft brilliance her tears had purified rather than dimmed. She wore the large straw hat we had found in the cabin, and her face was in shadow; her delicate, clear-cut pro-

file stood like a medallion upon the deep blue of the Pacific sky beyond, and her holding the spokes of the wheel threw her lovely figure into an attitude the most becoming to its delicate sweeps and curves.

From time to time I got up and went aloft to see that we were heading true for the island, and every time I looked I could view it from a lower elevation; until, a little before one, Nelly made the rocks out from the deck, and then they were not more than four or five miles distant.

The breeze had freshened and drawn a trifle to the southward; every wave had its head of froth; the whole ocean was as blue as the sky, and amazingly brilliant with the play of the waters. The little brig was walking bravely, throwing out a snow-white line from either bow, and the boat astern yerked and splashed and made as much fuss as though she were towing twenty miles an hour.

I now got up from the deck for good, and posting myself on the top of the deck-cabin, examined the island carefully with the glass. However, at that distance it would

not be possible to perceive, or at least to distinguish, so small an object as a human figure, and so I put the glass down, and going aft, lay hold of the boat's painter and dragged her alongside, and placed some water, brandy, and biscuits in her, and let her drop astern again. The next thing I did was to take the wheel from Nelly, asking her in the mean time to get some dinner for us; and I then luffed the brig, which the southing of the wind enabled me to do, until I had got the island a good three and a half points on the lee bow, my intention being to wear the vessel when we were near the island, and heave her to on the port tack.

It did not take me five minutes to make the meal I wanted, and then surrendering the helm to Nelly, I took the glass on to the top of the deck-house and again examined the island. By this time it was not more than two miles distant, and the first object my eye encountered when I levelled the glass was the figure of a man standing upon the extremity of the arm of reef. I shouted to Nelly that I could

see one of the men, keeping my eye at the glass whilst I called; but I could only see one man, though I narrowly and intently scrutinized every visible part of the island. This I thought strange, for surely both would be together to watch the brig coming to them; yet I could only see one, and nothing resembling a human figure was visible anywhere else.

However, we were approaching the island so rapidly that I had no longer any time to give to the glass. I went to the helm, and when the island was close enough to enable me to see that the man who stood on the reef was Matthews, I put the wheel hard over: the little brig, having good way on her, ran round like a top.

“Keep the wheel at this!” I cried to Nelly; and running forward, I let go the jib-sheet and hauled round the foreyards. By leaving the main-braces all fast, the maintopsail lay aback, and in this way the brig’s progress was checked, and the little vessel lay hove to.

I sprang aft and secured the wheel by a turn of a rope’s end.

“Now, Nelly,” I exclaimed, as I dragged the boat alongside, “I am going to leave you alone for a few minutes. There is not the least risk of the brig blowing away. Do not touch the wheel.” And so saying I slipped into the boat and sculled as fast as I could ply the oar to the reef on which Matthews stood. In his eagerness to meet the brig, so to speak, the poor fellow had come to the very extremity of the reef, and stood with the water flowing over his feet. I was terribly dismayed to observe no signs of Johnson. As I drew near I sculled very cautiously, keeping my face towards Matthews, and never while I live shall I forget his gesticulations as I approached; he flung his arms about and jerked his legs, as though it gave him pain to stand; he cried out to me, but owing to the noise made by the oar and the huskiness of his voice, I could not distinguish what he said even when I was quite near him. His face had a dreadfully haggard look, and his aspect was so wild that nothing more piteous could be imagined.

I brought the boat close to the point of

reef, and then quitted the oar to look over the side in order to see what water I had ; but the poor fellow's impatience was so great that he could not wait for me to give the boat another sheer. He splashed down the reef and caught hold of the gunwale of the boat when the water was as high as his armpits, and I had to bend over and with all my strength drag him in.

The moment he was in I gave the boat a shove to keep her clear of the reef, for there was a little swell, and I feared that she might be stove ; I then poured some brandy and water into a pannikin and handed it to Matthews, who swallowed it with terrible greediness. The draught acted like magic ; he clasped me round the neck, invoking a hundred blessings on me, and cried and sobbed like a child, exclaiming, " Oh, my God ! what a time I have passed ! Oh, Mr. Lee ! I never expected to see the brig again ! I thought I was a dead man ! " I handed him a biscuit, and he ate it with shocking avidity, biting as though he would chew up his tongue. There was a wound upon his temple, extending down the side

of his right eye, that appeared to have bled freely. The blood had stopped flowing, but had thickened into a black paste, and this, with the ravenous manner in which he ate, whilst the arteries worked in his forehead like the pulse in a consumptive wrist, and his haggard face and streaming hair and wild, open eyes, made him such an object as nothing but my compassion prevented me from recoiling from.

“Where is Johnson?” I asked.

“Dead,” he answered. “D’ye see this, Mr. Lee?” said he, pointing to the wound on his forehead. “He went mad last night, and fought me near half an hour, and at last he broke away and jumped over yon rock. I could not save him—I thought he had done for me.”

I mastered the horror his words inspired in me, and said, “Are the compasses at hand? Let us fetch them: we must not let the brig lie there drifting.”

“They’re up the creek: I’ll show ’em you, sir,” he exclaimed; on which I threw the oar over the stern and began to scull the boat. He begged for more water, and I

bade him help himself, but to drink cautiously; and he then ate another biscuit, and proceeded, in a wild sort of way, to tell me how it came about that they were unable to join the brig.

It appeared that, acting on my advice to row up the creek, they put their whole strength into the oars and pulled without looking where they were going, being anxious to despatch their errand and get finally clear of the island. All went well until they were half-way up the creek, when Johnson, who pulled the port oar, having a heavier hand than his mate, got the boat's head round a little, and another strong sweep of the two oars drove the boat grating and scraping over a flattish rock that lay close against the shore.

The boat's head touched the shore and her stern hung on the rock. Neither of the men believed that anything was wrong. Thinking the boat fast, and safe to be left, and that they should not be a minute gone, they both ran up the rocks to look for the compasses, imagining that two would find them faster than one. They found and

brought them down to the boat. Johnson got into the boat to receive the compasses from Matthews, who remained ashore. He was no sooner in than he called out that a couple of planks had been ripped out of her. Matthews put down the compasses and told Johnson to get on to the rock, and shove the boat off to see if she would float; but no sooner was she in deep water than she filled up to the gunwales. On this they left the boat and ran as hard as they could down to the reef in order to hail me to come for them in the other boat; but the brig's drift was so great, and the time they took in getting over the sharp, rugged rocks so long, that when at last they arrived at the reef they could just see the brig looming like a shadow and apparently a long way to leeward.

He had reached this part of his story when he broke off short and raised a cry, pointing to the water on the port side of the boat. I looked, and in the transparent water just under the aftermost portion of the western rock I beheld the figure of Johnson. It was impossible to tell how

deep he lay, for the white bottom of the creek appeared close to the surface, though in reality it was several fathoms deep; but the water covered him, and yet was so bright and clear that every detail of the corpse was as brilliantly defined as though we examined it under a concave glass. There was not a movement, unless it were the tide, the equable flow of which was unnoticeable, to ruffle the perfect serenity of the medium through which we surveyed the body of our poor drowned shipmate. He lay with his hair floating out and his hands dropping somewhat under him, the corpse inclined slightly to the left side; and if ever death merited the name of sleep's brother it was in the placid, reposeful posture of this body. And, strangely enough, not a stone's throw higher up the creek was the boat, with the water sparkling over it; both the body and the boat had gone down with the tide, and were now coming up with the tide.

I withdrew my eyes from the sorrowful sight, and catching the sheen of the brass compasses, as they stood about a hundred

yards along the creek close down by the water's edge, I sculled the boat alongside the shore, carefully looking out for the rock that had stove in the other boat. Having obtained the compasses, I asked Matthews if he felt able to take an oar. He answered yes; so we sat down, threw the oars into the thole-pins, and began to row. To tell the truth, I had had so much sculling that day that my arms ached with the job, and I wanted a little variety. Moreover, I was extremely anxious to regain the brig, for rowing, compared with sculling, is as four to one in the matter of speed.

I glanced at the shore as we went along, thinking of our sojourn in that creek, of the desperate hurricane that blew whilst we lay there, and of the death of the boatswain; and whilst I was thinking of Johnson we passed his body, and a most miserable fit of melancholy seized me. Of our little company of five, two were dead; there were but two men now to work the brig: were the lives of the three survivors to be spared? I thought of my own narrow escape, and looked at the figure of the poor

sailor in front of me toiling at his oar, and my head rang again with the wild exclamation he had uttered when he was in the boat, "Oh, my God! what a time I have passed!" Surely our cup had been poured full enough, and God would now grant us the security our torn and tired hearts were crying for.

I had not been gone above a quarter of an hour from the brig; yet, when we had rounded the mouth of the creek and had the vessel in view, I found that she had drifted at least a quarter of a mile. I saw Nelly's head over the bulwarks watching for me, and I called to Matthews to give way; but his strength was so impaired that I had to row lightly so as not to pull the boat's head round against him. When we reached the brig, I was obliged to help him over the side: his condition, indeed, resembled mine when I had got aboard after my ducking. I handed the compasses to Nelly, and made fast the boat's painter astern, intending to hoist her when Matthews had got back his strength.

Nelly said to me quickly, "Where is Johnson?"

“Dead!” I answered, just as Matthews had replied to that question from me.

“Oh, Will!” she cried, raising her hands: but she said no more at that time.

I asked her to take Matthews into the cabin and attend to his wound, and also to furnish him with more food; “for,” said I, “now that Johnson is gone this man’s strength is doubly precious to us.” She immediately went to where he was standing near the gangway, and taking his hand with an air of great tenderness led him into the cabin. I noticed the grateful look he fixed upon her as she approached him, and the flush of surprised pleasure that overspread his haggard face when she took his hand.

My first act was to replace the compass in the binnacle, and I then saw that the wind was E. by S., so that I had not been far out in my guessing. The sight of the compass again in its old place was almost as cheering to me as a ship bearing down to us would have been. No one could imagine what it was to look into the binnacle and find no compass there, and to know that there was no compass in the vessel.

There was nothing more, then, to detain us now at the island. It was the burial-mound of the seamen towards whom my heart yearned, as I looked at the naked rocks, which shone in places like steel, with a sorrow greater than it seems possible that two such men should excite in one who was not of their class. How priceless their companionship would have been to me now that we were about to start on a fresh voyage I cannot express; but it was otherwise ordained.

Before swinging the yards I went into the cabin to fetch the chart, being anxious to determine my course as accurately as I could. Matthews had shifted his wet clothes, and I found Nelly bathing his wound in some warm water which she had probably obtained from the galley whilst I was adjusting the compass. I did not stop to ask any questions, but fetched the chart and brought it on deck.

On taking the bearings of Valparaiso from the point on the chart on which I had laid down the position of the island by conjecture, I found that Juan Fernandez bore

due east from these rocks, distant about eleven hundred miles. As the wind blew dead on end (though, to be sure, it might shift in an hour, for there was not much of it), it could not concern me to immediately debate whether I should endeavour to fetch that island, or steer the best course I could come at by dead reckoning for Valparaiso.

However, I will say here that I had no hope of obtaining the help I wanted should I succeed in making Juan Fernandez; for though I had never been on the island, nor knew more of it than what I had learnt from the gossip of a whaling skipper who had put in there for water, I was aware that it belonged to Chili, and was a penal settlement, full of the worst rascals of a population of cut-throats, and that, as these convicts were very poorly watched by a few ragged and half-starved soldiers, it sometimes happened that during the night a batch of ruffians would steal aboard one of the vessels which put in for water or news, murder the crew, and run off to sea.

Nor, supposing I was willing to risk a danger of this kind, was I likely to find any

men on the island to ship as hands. But, as I have said, the wind was dead on end at this time, and what I had to consider was, not whether I should attempt to fetch Juan Fernandez, but which was the best tack to lay the brig on: whether I should work to leeward on the starboard tack in the hope of coming upon the south-east trades, which would enable me to close with the South American coast, and give me a choice of ports to the north of Huasco, or make a board to the southward and work resolutely for Valparaiso.

I hung over the chart thinking and thinking, nor was my deliberation of a kind that either Nelly or Matthews could help me in. However, all my prejudices lay in favour of Valparaiso, chiefly because from that port I should be able to take ship with Nelly to England, and likewise because the cargo of the brig was consigned to Valparaiso, and I should be able to make quick work of the salvage business.

I therefore resolved upon Valparaiso, and to stand to the southward. I pulled out my watch, being most anxious about my

time now that I should have nothing but dead reckoning to depend upon, but to my great annoyance I found that the water had stopped it when I fell overboard. I shook it, but it would not tick. But I had two chronometers, both going to the time indicated by my watch as set from the last observation I had taken in the *Waldershare*, so beyond my regret that my watch had stopped no harm was done.

I went into the cabin and looked at the chronometer, that swung on a tray, and found the time twenty minutes to three. Nelly had done bathing Matthews' wound, and had tied a strip of linen around his head. He was eating some preserved meat and biscuit, and when I asked him how he felt, he answered, much better, adding that he was deeply grateful to the lady for her kindness, and that his head gave him no pain. I inquired of Nelly if the wound was a bad one. She answered no; it was not deep, though it made an ugly place: it had been caused by his falling on the edge of a rock whilst he was defending himself against Johnson. So I judged by

this he had related his story to her; yet, ghastly as it was with the living evidence of Matthews' haggard, wounded face before her, it had not unnerved her. Still I was vexed that Matthews had told her the story. Her own experiences had filled her mind with enough horrors, and I did not relish that the sufferings of others should make any share in her memory of these dismal days.

I sat down to the table whilst Matthews ate, and told them the resolution I had formed to work the brig to Valparaiso, and why I chose that port. I saw Nelly's eyes brighten when I spoke of our finding a ship to carry us to England; it brought home the reality of our prospect of release from this terrible situation as nothing else could; and yet it sounded like a fancy, too, for England seemed a huge way off, and the feeling of our loneliness and helplessness had grown a habit not to be lightly got rid of.

"How long do you think it'll take us to fetch Valparaiso, sir?" Matthews asked.

I gave him the probable distance, and

added, that to judge from the specimen the brig had given us that morning of her sailing qualities, she was a fast boat and ought to make nothing of seven knots on a bow-line, though with no canvas on her above her topsails.

“And now,” said I, “the moment you have belayed eating, we’ll turn to and get the yards swung. The further we leave this island astern the better.”

“I’m ready, sir,” he exclaimed, jumping up; and I was glad to see a certain *spring* in his movements, for it showed that his strength was coming back to him fast.

We all three went on deck, and Nelly instantly began to cast the rope that lashed the wheel adrift, just as a sailor would.

“Oh, Mr. Lee, she’s a wonderful creature, sir! a noble woman!” exclaimed Matthews, as we went forward. “If ever a heart of oak beat in a gell, it beats in her, sir. May God Almighty bless her for her goodness, says I!”

“And so say I, Matthews. And now let’s have this mainyard round.”

We tailed on to the braces and swung

the main-topsail. I motioned to Nelly to shift the helm. In a moment the little brig felt the breeze, and the island began to glide away on our port beam. "We must give her all she can carry, Matthews," said I; "so let's get the jigger on the fore tack." We bowsed the leech taut and hauled out the bowline. We then clapped the jigger on to the topsail halliards and took the end to the capstan through a snatch-block, and got both sails well set. This done, we boarded the main tack, set the mizzen, hauled flat the jib and staysail sheets; hauled the boat alongside, hooked her on and hoisted her up. I then went and looked at the compass, and finding that Nelly had not let her come as close as she would lie, I put the helm down until a tremor in the weather leech of the topsail warned me that she was near enough. Her head was then S.E. by S., and the little vessel was smoking through the smooth blue waters like a steamer.

Our coming back to the island again, when only last night we got under weigh and believed we were leaving it for good,

had made me regard the rocks as a curse that was not to be shaken off; and as I viewed the land now dropping astern and gleaming in the sunshine—I may say as white as our sails—I wondered whether I was really taking my last look.

We all three stood gazing at it; and I was struck by the peculiar expression in Matthews' face. He was but an ordinary-looking seaman, and yet suffering had given such an interest to his countenance that, had you met him in the street, you would certainly have stopped to look after him. Remembering this man, I cannot help believing that suffering refines the features, or at least the expression, almost as much as study and intellect do. There appeared a strong cast of thought in his face; his eyes had a wan, pensive, abstracted air; and still he was the same rough, hardy sailor, with stout, bare arms, which he swung athwartships; broad-shouldered, with a sinewy neck, and an easy, rolling gait, and with no change to denote the suffering of the night he had gone through but this expression in his face that I speak of, unless

it were his haggardness, that however was growing momentarily less visible.

I told him to bring some chairs from the cabin, and we seated ourselves. I steered by steadying the wheel with my foot, for the brig wanted little or no watching. I was anxious to hear his story, or at least as much of it as he had left untold, and asked him to go on with it, not minding that Nelly was present now that she had heard how Johnson died.

He said that they remained standing on the reef for two hours—long, very long after they had lost sight of the green light I had set in the main rigging. They both of them knew that, whilst the off-shore wind held, I should be unable, single-handed as I was, to fetch the island; and yet, in spite of this conviction, they both stood straining their eyes into the darkness and listening, hoping to catch the grind of an oar.

Then Johnson asked Matthews what was to be done. There was not a drop of water on the island; there was no food; they had not so much as a piece of tobacco in their

pockets. What was to be done? Matthews answered that nothing could be done. The breeze might shift and enable Mr. Lee to make the island: they must wait for day-break. "Ay," says Johnson, "but if Mr. Lee loses sight of the land, how will he know which way to head for it? He has no compasses aboard, and therefore can't take the bearings of the island." This thought came so crushingly upon Matthews that he feared it would drive him out of his mind. The swell was breaking over the reef as high as his knees, and he walked until he got upon higher ground, and then sat down. Presently he heard Johnson calling; he answered, and Johnson came up to him in a violent hurry, and in a savage, disordered manner asked with an oath why he had left him alone. Matthews told him to sit down. He said, "No; come along to the beach and see if there's anything to be done with the boat."

They searched the beach, but there was no boat to be found, though there was enough starlight in the water to have revealed her had she been there. Matthews

said that the tide had carried her down the creek, on which Johnson ran up and down the beach, blaspheming and cursing in such a way as to terrify Matthews, who walked up the rocks away from him. After five minutes or so he heard Johnson shouting, but he would not answer: he was afraid of the man. Johnson then screamed his name in the most frightful voice. The whole island rang with the sound, and it seemed to Matthews that twenty people were yelling his name in different parts of the rocks.

The glare of the bonfire on the western headland threw a ruddy light across the creek, and Matthews could see Johnson running to and fro, brandishing his arms, whilst he shrieked out his name, though he never went beyond a certain part of the beach. The poor wretch's violent manner made Matthews eager to keep out of his sight. He almost forgot their dreadful situation in watching the extraordinary behaviour of his mate. After a time Johnson gave over calling for him. The bonfire waxed low, and the creek lay

steeped in darkness. Finding Johnson quiet, Matthews rose and made his way to a higher point of the island, and there sat looking in the direction the brig had taken. All the horrors of his position now rushed upon him with renewed force. He knew that unless the brig could fetch the island he was doomed. He thought of the lingering death he should suffer; and such was the agony of his soul, that twice he half rose with the intention of flinging himself into the sea, but checked himself by repeating the Lord's Prayer, that being the only prayer he knew. The washing of the base of the rocks by the swell was the only sound he heard.

He had been in this posture for how long he could not tell, but he thought about an hour, when he heard footsteps behind, and he had barely time to gain his feet when he felt the powerful grasp of Johnson upon his throat. The madman shouted some observation to him, but what it was he could not catch, as the compression of his throat made him deaf.

As he described this struggle the sweat-

drops broke out on his forehead, and several times he stopped and lay back, breathing short, and as pale as death.

He said that Johnson tried to drag him to the edge of the rocks, so as to fling him into the sea. He managed, by a mighty effort, to shake his throat clear of the madman's hands, and twice struck him down with such force that each time he believed he had killed him. Yet each time, after lying motionless for some minutes, Johnson sprang to his feet with a dreadful cry, and recommenced his attack.

This awful struggle Matthews believed lasted over half an hour. Once he fell and gashed his forehead, but he was up again before Johnson could seize him. At last Johnson, uttering a singular cry, broke away, sprang across the rocks, and flung himself or fell headlong into the creek about three hundred yards below the spot where the brig had been moored. Matthews knew he was in the water by the splash of the body, but the poor creature was too exhausted to attempt to save the madman; he was bleeding from the head, was sick and giddy,

and under the impression that he was dying he pulled off his coat, rolled it up to serve as a pillow, and lay down to die in this manner. Towards the small hours he fell asleep, and slept until the sun was high; he then got up, and the first thing he saw was the brig's sails shining down in the south.

This ended his story, for he was incapable of expressing the various emotions which agitated him until the gradual enlargement of the brig upon the sea assured him that she was heading for the island. It was a narrative the like of which for tragical horror, even told as he told it, in his rough and broken dialect, and amid many pauses whilst he sought for words, I had never heard of, and the expression of his face as he related it, coupled with his acting the part for want of language to make it clear, gave it such a wild picturesque force as several times obliged me to hold my breath whilst I listened.

However, it was all past now like a terrible nightmare, though God alone knew what further adventures we were yet to enter

upon. Yet we had good reason, as things were, to have confidence in the future, and to believe that the last chapter of our disastrous voyage was nearly written; for the brig was breasting the blue waters with the airy speed of a gull, and behind her streamed a long, lustrous track of polished water, defined on either side by a sparkling line of froth, and overhead was a sky of soft deep blue, with here and there a little puff of snow-white cloud, and all about the rigging and in and among the sails the breeze was humming a sunny tune.

“Our fate is in our own hands,” I said to Matthews. “There are two of us to work this brig—I will not say three, though I know what this lady’s help means in a time of need. The first thing we have to do is to keep the ensign jack down; so let us hoist away at once, for the mere keeping of that rag flying is as hearty as a chance to a man’s eyes.”

We bent on the ensign and ran it as high as the cross-trees, where it blew out gaily. “And now,” said I, “about our keeping watch. To begin with, you and I,

Matthews, mustn't talk of the cabin as a place to lie in at night, unless the weather turns foul. We must lie where we shall be at hand able to hear the first cry. We can throw a mattress to leeward of the deck-house yonder, and two hours' sleep for a spell is all that we must want."

"Right, sir; that'll keep me going," said he.

"We must take care to see all clear for running in case of a squall," I continued, "and we must keep the watch-tackle handy. This lady," said I, with a smile at Nelly, "will help us to steer during the day, but only on condition that she goes to her berth at night and does not show herself until sunrise next morning."

"Very well, Will," she answered. "You shall have your way. My other duties will be to see to the meals, and keep watch should you feel sleepy in the day."

"Yes. And now, Matthews, as you have passed a frightful night, go and fetch a mattress, place it yonder, and sleep until I call you."

These arrangements were the best I

could make : and I was right about the sleeping on deck, for this reason ; that at night the only one of us awake would be at the wheel ; should it breeze up suddenly, the man who steered could not leave the helm to rouse his mate in the cabin, nor would his voice carry so far ; whereas, if he lay on deck, the first cry would put him on his legs, ready to do whatever was necessary.

CHAPTER VI.

H.M.S. —.

ALTHOUGH we were heading a course that, if persisted in, instead of taking us to Valparaiso, would carry us into the Antarctic zone, yet the further we trended to the eastwards the greater would be the number of ships we were likely to meet with; for, although I do not say that it is utterly impossible for two men to work a brig of two hundred tons, yet I am quite sure that such an undertaking would be terribly full of risk in the event of squally weather, and I was therefore extremely anxious to meet a ship to obtain assistance out of her. Moreover, my anxiety to speak a vessel was increased by the want of a sextant. Added to this, Nelly was so badly off for clothes that she had nothing to wear but what she

stood in, and there was always the chance of a ship having a woman on board—either the captain's wife, or a passenger—who would be willing to sell me a change of linen for Nelly. You smile; and indeed these are strange things for a man to talk about; but let me tell you that in such a situation as we were in, it is the homely things which fill one's thoughts and make up the bitter interests of the days.

Whilst Matthews lay sleeping on the mattress on deck, I gave Nelly the wheel to hold, and procuring some paper, I ruled and prepared a form for my dead reckoning, with lines for the time, course, wind, and speed as shown by the reel-log. This done, I nailed it against the bulkhead by the cabin door, and slung a pencil alongside of it, and entered upon it the day on which we had left the island and the hour; and I very well remember as I went on deck deploring that science had not furnished the mariner with a more exact and easy method of determining the speed of a ship than the clumsy old-fashioned reel-log, that requires three men to use it—one to turn the glass,

one to pay out the line, and a third to hold the reel. I wanted to heave the log now, but had not the heart to waken Matthews; and yet I could not heave it without him. However, I was able to guess our speed by observing the rate at which the rocks were sinking astern almost as accurately as the log would have given it. Our pace was at least seven knots, and the breeze was slightly freshening.

I had quite recovered from my tumble overboard. The interest of fetching the island, the excitement of picking up Matthews, of getting the brig under weigh, etc., had driven the remembrance of that feat out of my head, and so, by my mind not dwelling upon it, my nerves plucked up amazingly, and I did not feel the least inconvenience from the immersion.

I went forward to see how our jury gear stood the strain of the breeze, and found everything as secure as I could wish. So far as the sailing power of the brig was concerned, her present speed was no fair test of her qualities, for here was a breeze in which she could have carried royals and studding-

sails, whereas the canvas we showed would have been thought snug for a gale of wind. Yet when I looked over her weather-bow and watched the clear, polished curl of water her sharp stem cut out of the sea, breaking into foam when abreast of the fore-rigging, and rushing aft like the racing froth out of a water-mill, a thrill of delight passed through me. It was like being in a steamer to see the little waves running slantwise up to us and hurrying away astern; and when I glanced at the blue sky, and the level expanse of ocean beaded with sparkling crests, and then aft at Nelly steering with perfect coolness, and holding the vessel as steady as a house, I could scarcely realize the severity of the trials we had passed through, nor believe but that this was a little fancy pleasure-trip, and that the frolic was one of Nelly's whims.

A little before five o'clock the brig broke off a couple of points, and headed S. by E. There was too much southing in this to suit my book, so I roused up Matthews and told him I meant to wear ship.

He sprang to his feet, rubbing his eyes,

with a terrible air of amazement and fright in his face. "Good God!" cried he, "it was only a dream!"

"Were you dreaming of the island, Matthews?" I said.

"Ay, sir," he answered, wiping his forehead; "I thought it was Bob grappling me again."

"You'll have to put up with a few dreams of that kind for a spell, my man," said I. "But they'll not trouble you long. Hand me out the reel and the glass yonder."

I gave the glass to Nelly, and told her to turn it when I cried "turn!" and I then hove the log, and made the speed six and three-quarter knots.

"That means that the island is not far short of seventeen miles astern of us," said I, as I hauled in the line. "I don't think it will give us any more trouble."

I let go the main tack and sheet, and signalled to Nelly to put the helm hard up. The little vessel rattled round like a top, and in a few minutes we had her braced sharp up on the starboard tack, making the water smoke as she began to yerk a little to the tumble.

It was time to look to the supper, and Nelly went forward.

Do you know what the galley of a small brig is? It is a little bit of a house just abaft the foremast, containing an oven and a couple of coppers for cooking the tea and the salt junk. Though the galley of the *Morning Star* was a little paradise compared to the galleys in many vessels of her size, yet it was but a dirty, dark little hole of a place too. But had it been a large, roomy, sunny kitchen Nelly could not have entered it more cheerfully, nor buckled to the work of it with a gayer face.

I hope no lady-reader (bah! what a compound! but let it go) will think fit to turn up her nose at Helen Williams. I can only say, madam, with all my heart, God grant it may never be your fate to find yourself in such a situation as Miss Williams' love for the second mate of a sailing ship had placed her in. Every fool knows that the part of fine lady is not at all hard to play. There is scarcely a servant-maid whose Sunday clothes do not fit her with such airs as might qualify her to serve as a duchess,

could she but get the title. But the lady who hits the sailor's fancy best is she who, in hours of suffering, maintains her calmness and her pluck; who shrinks from no duty, no matter how menial and soiling, that helps the common weal; who is patient and compassionate of any one sooner than herself; who has the spirit of a man, but the heart of a woman. If you have not found Miss Williams to be this it is the fault of my pen. She did not mind risking her hands and complexion to light the galley fire and cook a piece of salt beef. There are many girls like her in this country, I do believe; but they play so small a part in stories that the portrait of one of them is too curious not to require an apology from the showman who takes the liberty to submit it.

The breeze was fresh enough to give the brig a good list. The sky was wonderfully bright and blue, with a few woolly clouds scudding across it; but, as I had already discovered, in these seas a gale of wind will blow without ever a cloud appearing in the sky; and gloriously fine as was the afternoon, it gave me no assurance that the breeze might not freshen into a hurricane.

Matthews helped Nelly to bring the supper aft, and I ate and steered at the same time, drinking tea with one hand and grasping a spoke with the other, whilst the wind blew down upon us out of the belly of the great mizzen, and the little brig was beginning to pitch and curvet and souse her counter upon the surges in such a manner as to spread a whole acre of foam astern and on either quarter. The froth to leeward was above the scupper-holes, and the sound at her bows as she tore through the water was like ripping a sheet of silk in halves.

“If this breeze would only haul aft we should make short work of our longitude,” said I.

“It’ll be a bit of a job to get that mainsail in,” said Matthews, “if it comes on to blow fresher.”

“I know that,” I answered; “and we must contrive to stow it presently. But let us make the most of this whilst we have it. The sun will be with us for another hour and a half, and I want to give that island our heels. It’s much too close aboard

as it is. Do you know, if it should breeze up so as to oblige us to run, we should plump into it again? It has taken two good men from us, and I'm for keeping clear of it."

"Don't imagine that I want to see it again, Mr. Lee," said Matthews, with a strong shudder; and the mere idea of being blown back to it seemed absolutely to crush down his spirit, though he brightened up when he looked over the side and saw the foam sluicing by in a wide torrent.

After we had held on in this way another half-hour, until the rising sea and the heeling of the brig and the quiver and arrowy-like motion of her leaps as she sprang from wave to wave, sometimes flinging the spray like glittering dust as high as her foretop, whilst the jury jib-boom buckled under the tug of the big jib and the jerking of the bows, like a steel foil lunged against a pad, I gave Nelly the wheel (for the vessel steered very easily), and, with the help of Matthews, I hauled up the weather main clew garnet; but, when we let go the sheet, the sail slatted so violently

that it was as much as we could do, even with the winch, to get the canvas up to leeward. But we were as obstinate as the wind, and, as we had no mind to lose this sail, we got upon the yard, and inch by inch secured it.

Relieved of this large sail, the brig ran along more easily; and just before the sun went down, and very greatly to my delight, the wind veered to the southward sufficiently to enable me to head due east; so that we might say every hour now was taking us six or seven miles nearer to Valparaiso.

I watched the sunset with some anxiety, for in these latitudes I have always obtained a good clue to the character of the coming weather from the look of the sky at sundown. The crimson was very bright and deep, but not angry; there was no malignant scarlet glow; the pink clouds which came sailing over the horizon as the sun sank produced a curious effect, as though indeed the contact of the molten orb with the sea threw up puffs of steam; the red haze was not diffused as I had noticed was the case prior to the hurricane that drove

the *Waldershare* to the westward; in the east and north the sky was a pale, smoky-looking blue, and in the south, whence the sea was running under the wind, the heads of the waves shone with a palish orange colour, and made the darker blue of the sky that way look marvellously soft.

“I see no indications of bad weather in that sunset,” I said to Nelly and Matthews, both of whom watched my face as I gazed; “and with the wind at south, even should we have to scud for our lives, we cannot come to much harm by going north: it is not like going west. So now that we have the mainsail stowed I shall let the brig keep her other canvas, and take her chance of what may come. What we can’t furl must blow away. This old top must be kept humming.”

“I’m willing to do any mortal thing I can, sir,” said Matthews. “I’m pretty nigh tired o’ this voyage, Mr. Lee. If it wasn’t that I’m not fit for any sort o’ work ashore, I don’t think I should go to sea again.”

Nelly smiled; for the *naïveté* of the poor fellow would have set a judge grinning.

“Though this voyage has brought us a good many kicks,” I said, “we shall be able to take up a few halfpence too, if we can manage to bring the vessel safe to port. I hope to earn enough, Nelly, not only to pay our passage home, but to give you a very much handsomer rig out than what you brought away with you.”

This talk put us into good spirits, but it was now dark, and over our head was the moon, with enough power to silver a little fragment of sea in the south. I told Matthews to get the green lantern lighted and trimmed, whilst I lighted the binnacle and cabin lamps. We hauled down the ensign and hoisted the lantern to the royal-masthead; and this being done we hove the log, and found that the furling of the mainsail had dropped the clever little craft only a quarter of a knot.

For my part I was beginning to fall in love with this *Morning Star*. There had been times, indeed, when I had called down a few curses upon her, and I dare say under the circumstances a more pious man than I would have done the same thing. But now

that she was properly afloat, and showing me what a real racer she was—I say, when I saw the way she put her nose down to the sea and shredded it like a steam plough turns up a fat soil, whilst every plunge was as nimble as the swing a dolphin gives himself when he starts in chase of a wounded brother, and the water swept away from her in smoke, as you may see it fly from the shaggy coat of a Newfoundland dog when he leaps on to dry land and shakes himself—my heart warmed up to the little hooker. I felt as proud of her as though I had built and owned her; and when I cast my eyes aloft at her bestumped fore-topmast, and her long withe-like main top-gallant mast and royal-mast bare of yards, I thought, “If, becrippled as you are—one-eyed and one-legged, as I may say—you can froth the water as you are doing, what would not you accomplish with all your spars taut and erect on you, your stun’sails ballooning over your sides, and your royals tearing at the top-gallant yards like white clouds striving to join their fleecy sisters sailing across the sky!”

Exhilarated by the pace of the brig, the promise of fine weather, the prospect of speedy release, and of soon having my darling safe ashore, I somewhat startled her by abruptly asking if there was any hot water in the galley.

“Why, yes, Will,” said she, laughing; “but why do you ask?”

“Because I want to make a bowl of punch, Nelly, to toast the *Morning Star* in and to drink to our speedy liberation. Here, Matthews, lay hold of this wheel; and, Nelly, come you along with me.”

And away we went to the galley, where we got some hot water; and there being a whole case of lemons in the store-room, I turned to and brewed with rum, brandy, a dash of the wine, a couple of lemons and sugar, as much punch as gave each of us a tumbler full, and carried it aft to the wheel; and there we sat and talked, Matthews and I smoking, and Nelly now and again taking a modest sip from my glass. But it would not do; our spirits would not hold. None of us could look abroad upon the dark and mighty ocean, over whose

mysterious breast our little vessel was racing, without an emotion of awe that checked our light-hearted mood. Nor could we so direct our conversation but that presently we must find ourselves speaking of the *Waldershare*, the long-boat and her living freight, and then of the boatswain and Johnson. It was but a few short days ago that we were a numerous company, with a noble ship under our feet, our outward journey nearly over; and now there were but three left, so far as we could tell, and each of us, God knows, had gone through an experience heavy enough to keep us sighing, even when our thoughts were not on it—I with the dreadful hours I had passed alone on the brig; Nelly with the memory of the open boat at sea, and the horror of the sinking ship; and Matthews with the recollection of the night spent on the island.

Indeed, we found it more congenial to our moods to talk of these things than to force ourselves into a gaiety with which our hearts had no correspondence. I remember Nelly saying, as we sat hand in

hand, whilst Matthews grasped the wheel, and whilst the whole of the deck was resonant with the crying of the wind aloft and the roaring of the passing water, that was so full of phosphorus it looked as if a green light were being burnt over it—

“People on shore always speak of the sea as being so uninteresting, Will. They think its life consists in sighting ships and seeing sharks and meeting gales. They are lucky people who have made a voyage and can remember nothing more about the sea than that. *I* haven’t found the sea uninteresting.”

The sea uninteresting! But Nelly was right. It is thought so; and the landsman will continue to think so until a race of sailor-authors, worthy of this great maritime country, arise to relate what they have seen and heard; what has befallen themselves and others; whose simple narratives, never exaggerating the bare truth, shall exhibit the real interests, the wondrous romances, of the eternal deep.

At nine o’clock I sent Nelly to her cabin. She had been up since dawn, had done a

great deal of work; she had gone through a period of exhausting excitement when I fell overboard; and when I said good-night to her I made her faithfully promise that she would not leave her berth unless I called her. Were her strength to fail; were she to fall ill—nay, the mere idea of her falling ill, through over-fatigue, was inexpressibly dreadful to me. So I was very earnest indeed in the way I begged her to take rest. “For,” said I, “you cannot be of any help to me on deck in the darkness; and, should your strength fail you, I should break down too. Therefore, remember you hold two people’s lives in your hands.”

She saw how earnest and agitated I was, and promised to do what I asked, so we said good-night; and then coming back to Matthews with one of the chronometers, I placed it on the deck, telling him to rouse me up at eleven o’clock; on which I threw myself down on the mattress, pulled a blanket over me, and was soon asleep.

Nothing particular happened during the night. The breeze held steady, but freshened a little at one o’clock in the morning,

but the brig had no more on her than she could bear, and was making a fine run. I calculated, if this breeze held, we should not have run less than one hundred and fifty miles from the island by noon next day, and that we might not want dead reckoning, I punctually hove the log every two hours, though, there being but two hands, the job was a troublesome one. However, we managed it in this way: we secured the wheel and took the binnacle lamp out and set it on the grating to leeward; Matthews held one end of the reel with his right hand and steadied the other end by pressing it against his ribs, whilst with his left hand he turned the glass. By this means we managed to get the speed very fairly, but we should never have been able to do so had not the brig been close-hauled, and steered herself.

When I aroused Matthews at five o'clock the dawn was grey in the east. I told him I would lie an hour, and then he could lie an hour; after which we would get breakfast. But I had not been sleeping twenty minutes when a cry from Matthews awoke me. He was pointing ahead, and called out,

“There’s a sail, Mr. Lee ; she looks to be standing from the south’ards.”

I instantly sprang to my feet and seized the glass. The sail was very white and distinct under the light of the newly risen sun, about three points on our starboard bow. Her hull was below the horizon, but her sails from her topsails up were visible, and by the trim of her yards I could see that she was a full-rigged ship, heading about north-east, and carrying the wind about a point abaft the beam.

The question was, was she sailing fast enough to cross our bows and go away to leeward before we could make our signal of distress visible ? I ran into the cabin and knocked on Nelly’s door, and told her there was a ship in sight, and asked her to come on deck. Then, to save time, I sprang into the main rigging and lay out upon the main-yard, and cast off the gaskets ready to set the sail. By the time I had come down Nelly was out of her cabin, so, first showing her where the ship was, I asked her to take the wheel, and immediately hauled down the lantern and ran the ensign up half-mast ;

although I could not hope much from that for the present, at all events, as the flag flew directly away from the ship and was not likely to be seen.

This done, I called to Matthews, and we boarded the main-tack and hauled the sheet aft. The breeze was still very fresh—indeed, it was like a trade wind—and blowing as it was from the southward, I was not sure but that it might veer round to the eastward and settle into the south-east trades. The mainsail gave the brig a decided impulse, and there being now a middling tumble of sea on, she soon had her forecastle shining and the water bubbling along the scuppers.

However, I was resolved not to let the sight of the ship excite me as the others had done. If she sailed faster than we and got away, well, she must go ; having given the brig the mainsail, I could do no more but wait. If that ship failed us we were bound to come across others presently, heading as we were and sailing as we were.

I spoke to this effect to Nelly and Matthews, so that if the ship outsailed us the disappointment might not depress them ;

and levelling the telescope afresh, I took another long look at the distant sail.

Either we were raising her fast or she was coming up fast; for by this time her courses were visible. She was a whole cloud of canvas, with three jibs and a staysail forward, main royal, and half a dozen staysails between her masts. The brilliant sun stood just over her stern, and her sails looked as white and glossy as pearl, and not always distinguishable, unless it were by their steadiness, from the clouds which here and there flecked the sky. It seemed impossible that the little brig under topsails only, and with a reef in her foretopsail too, would be able to bring herself within eyeshot, so to speak, of that large ship going free and showing such a vast number of cloths; and yet, being close-hauled, we would necessarily find the wind much stronger than did the ship that was carrying it abaft the beam; and judging from the manner in which the brig was tearing through it, making a perfect skipping-ground of the seas, flashing up the water astern of her, and fogging her bows with spray until half the jib was

brown with the drenching, she seemed to have as much sail as she wanted to make her go. She knew her errand, and went for the ship like a horse for a winning-post.

I sent Matthews forward to light the galley fire, and Nelly got breakfast for us. But before the water boiled we had risen the ship's hull, and, on examining her with the glass, I found her to be so deep that I could scarcely believe that we had hove up all of her that was above water, until I caught sight of the white streak of foam along her side. She was painted black, with an up-and-down cargo-built bow and a square stern—no great beauty, certainly; and I now found that we were not only overhauling her fast, but that we had heels enough to sail round and round her; for, indeed, she looked to be loaded down to her waterways. My idea had been to go to leeward of her, in order that she might see our distress signal; but, finding that we were sailing four feet to her three, I sung out to Matthews to slacken away the lee main, and fore braces, and let the brig go off a couple of points. This manœuvre

brought the ship well abaft the starboard bow.

Breakfast being ready, we ate it on deck. By the time we had done, the ship was not above five miles distant. I watched her anxiously, for her being so near kindled an uncontrollable feeling of excitement. It was impossible to tell what countryman she was, though from her long royal-mast heads, and the sharp sheer of her counter, and her cottony-looking canvas, I thought she might be an American. I could just make out some figures walking behind the white rail of her after-deck. Never before had I seen any vessel loaded so deep as this. It amazed me to think that men could be got to ship in a hull that looked as flat as a board on the water.

I had put down the glass to squint aloft to see what our canvas was doing, when Nelly called out, "She has hoisted a flag, Will."

"English, by Jupiter!" I exclaimed, after examining the colours a few moments; for the flag blew dead on end, and it was a hard job to catch its nationality. To give

our signal a better chance, I took the halliards right aft, and sloped the flag, that was blowing out like a red flame at the height of the cross-trees.

The two vessels were now converging fast, and the brig's superior sailing powers were shown by the manner in which we kept the ship steady at one point a little abaft the starboard bow. In about three-quarters of an hour I could see the white letters of her name on her square black stern, though I could not read the name. She washed along as steady as a rock, the sea running past her sides without lifting her, as you may see it do along a deep-laden barge. The men on her decks were now clearly visible—a group forward of the lee fore-shrouds, one or two heads at the bulwarks amidships, and three men and a woman watching us aft, one looking at us through a glass.

“Nell,” said I, “there’s one of your sex aboard of her. I hope they’ll be able to see there are only three of us here. Hillo! what are they up to?”

As I spoke I saw the group of men forward

tumble off the forecastle, and immediately afterwards the mainsail was hauled up. At the same moment a string of flags was run up at the gaff end: but they were of no use to us; we had no book to tell us what they meant.

"They will heave to!" I cried, shutting up the telescope with a swing that nearly broke it. "See! round go their mainyards. Nell, take the wheel, my darling! Down with it—down with it—so! Keep it steady now. Jump forward, Matthews, and let go the starboard main braces!" and with many a rush, and by hauling like madmen, we got the main clew-garnets up, flowed the jib-sheet, backed the mainyards, and lay hove to. But before this was done, there being but two of us to do the work, we had greatly neared the ship, and the two vessels were not half a mile apart.

Even had they not seen our distress-signal, the mere fact of Nelly being at the wheel would convince them that there was something desperately wrong aboard of us. In a few minutes they lowered away the

port quarter-boat, with half a dozen hands in her, who pulled directly for us. The boat had a whaling cut, sharp at both ends and painted white, and she glanced over the seas like a bird, the six long oars making the water foam under her.

I unshipped the gangway, and sent Matthews forward to stand by with a line. I will not attempt to describe the feelings which possessed me as I stood watching the advancing boat and the ship beyond, that had hauled down her signals and had again hoisted the English ensign. It seemed ages since I had sighted other faces than those who had been my companions in adversity; and when I turned to look at Nelly, who still held the wheel, and thought of what she had gone through, and that the presence of this ship was a promise that the end of our trials was at hand, my heart beat faintly in my breast; I felt a swimming in the head, and my finger-nails cut into the palms of my hands as I struggled to recover my fortitude.

The man who steered the boat was a young, grave-looking, sunburnt fellow,

dressed in blue serge trousers and a round cloth coat. The men pulled like men-of-war's men, with a long, sturdy, resolute sweep, and when they were alongside threw in their oars with admirable precision. Four of them were South Sea Islanders, dark-faced, bright-eyed, good-tempered-looking creatures. The bowman caught the rope flung by Matthews, the boat sheered alongside, and the young fellow, who proved to be the mate of the ship, came on board.

He touched his hat, looking very hard at Nelly, and around him, and up aloft; and, pointing to Matthews, said, "Is that all of your crew?"

I told him that was all, and then ordered Matthews to the wheel, as I wanted Nelly by my side. The following conversation then took place:—

The Mate. "I see you are in distress. A regular bad job it looks, sir, and very bad for this lady. What brig is this?"

Mr. Lee. "The *Morning Star*, from Port Otago. I was second mate of the *Waldershare*, bound from London to Callao. We

sighted this brig water-logged, and I went aboard of her, and was left in her by my boat going adrift. Next day the *Waldershare* struck on a sunken reef. The long-boat put off with nearly all hands; but four of the crew and this lady got away in the quarter-boat, and, after knocking about, overhauled this brig. We fetched a little island that's not down on the chart, and stopped the leak; but one of my men died, and the other went mad and drowned himself, and so here are the survivors endeavouring to work the brig to Valparaiso."

The Mate. "I knew the *Waldershare*. I saw her last year at Callao. She was a fine ship, and I'm sorry to hear she's gone. How can we help you?"

Mr. Lee. "You see there are but two men to work this brig. Can you lend us a couple of hands?"

The Mate. "We shan't be able to do that, I'm afraid. We're short-handed as it is. Yonder's a lumping craft for sixteen hands; and that's our number, all told."

Mr. Lee. "Can you let me have one man, then?"

The Mate. "I'm afraid not. Our captain's grumbling all day long over the Kanakas, who are slow fists. But I dare say he'd take this lady and you and your man aboard. He'll do that. We are bound to San Francisco, and our ship's the *Eagle*."

Mr. Lee. "I'm much obliged; but it would be a pity to leave this little craft after the trouble she has given us. I'm sorry you can't lend us a couple of hands."

The Mate. "Were we bound to Valparaiso it might be managed; but San Francisco is a long way off, and we want all the men we have."

Mr. Lee. "Then excuse me for a minute, whilst I exchange a few words with this lady."

I drew Nelly away, whilst the mate, after looking over the side to see that his boat was safe, went aft and talked to Matthews.

"You have heard his offer, Nelly," said I. "Tell me now, my darling, will you go aboard that ship?"

"Without you? Certainly not, Will."

"Let us consider both sides before we resolve," I said. "First, and for myself,

I shall stick to the brig and carry her, if I can, to Valparaiso. That I've resolved upon. If I can get help on the road, so much the better; but I mean that this brig shall repay me for some of the trouble I have had in her and through her. But that concerns me——”

“Will,” she interrupted, “I do not know why you should go on arguing. If you mean to stop in the brig, is not that enough? Should not that decide me?”

“No. I am willing to endure another spell of hard work, for the sake of saving the brig. But that is no reason why you should stay aboard. Yonder ship will make a safer home than this, and will land you at San Francisco, where the English consul will look after you until I can join you.”

However, although I did not stop at this, but pointed out the risks the brig might yet encounter, the long time it might take us to fetch Valparaiso, etc., whilst in the ship she would be as safe as one can hope to be at sea, and have the companionship of one of her own sex—I say, although I continued reasoning with her, I saw by

the expression in her face that she barely listened to me for impatience, and that every now and again she would give her head an eager shake.

“I see you are determined not to leave the brig, Nell.”

“Of course not, without you. How could you have the heart to try to persuade me?”

I went over to the mate and told him that I had conferred with the lady, and that she preferred to remain with me in the brig. As for myself, it was my intention to navigate the brig to Valparaiso. She was a smart vessel; and though it was hard work for two men to work her, yet it was to be done, as our being where we were proved.

He slightly smiled when I gave him Nelly's decision, and said, “She has plenty of pluck, and I hope you'll make a speedy end of your voyage. I'm sorry we can't give you the help you want.”

I turned to Matthews and told him the mate's offer, intending, if he decided upon quitting the brig, to ask for a volunteer in exchange; for I had it in my power to

offer a reward that was pretty sure to find me a substitute for Matthews; but on his learning Nelly's and my decision, he immediately said he would stop with us and take his chance, and I believe, by the way he said this, that he never thought of salvage nor of obtaining any reward for his services in agreeing to stop, but that he was wholly influenced by his liking for Nelly and me, and by his sailorly instinct of sticking to old shipmates in trouble.

"As we can't help you as you wish," said the mate, "is there any other assistance we can render you?"

"I am without a sextant," I replied, "and have no meridian time, being utterly dependent on dead reckoning, which I fear may lead me into a bother, as my point of departure was a guess, to start with. If you have a spare sextant you can sell me, and will time one of my chronometers, I shall be immensely grateful."

He reflected, and answered, "I think it can be managed. I rather think the second mate's got a sextant—one of a pair, which he might be willing to let you have. If

you'll put your chronometer into the boat, I'll see what can be done."

I thanked him, and said, "I see you have a lady aboard?"

"The captain's wife," he answered.

On this I explained that Nelly had lost all her clothes in the *Waldershare*, and begged him to mention this to the captain's lady, and ask her if she could spare a small parcel of linen—I should be glad to pay any price she might ask.

"Very well," said he, bluffly. "Anything more?"

I told him that was all. Whereupon he called to his men to haul the boat alongside, asking me at the same time if I would accompany him. I answered that I did not like to leave the brig in a sea-way with only one man on board; and, without another word, he dropped into the boat, taking with him one of my chronometers.

When he was gone, I went over to Matthews and shook him very heartily by the hand, thanking him for sticking to me. "We may meet with some rough work," said I, "or it may turn out pleasant sailing ;

but come what will, Matthews, I shall always gratefully remember your loyalty, and I'll take care, when we get to Valparaiso, that the end of your handkerchief is tasselled with dollars."

He replied that he was quite content to remain with me. "We've seen some hard times, sir—you and me and the lady—and I should be a poor creature to rat from the hooker that's twice saved my life."

I stood with Nelly looking at the boat dancing over the waters, and the big ship beyond standing as solid as a church, with the bright seas leaping around her, her fore and aft canvas swelling, and of a brilliant whiteness, with an arching of tender shadow along the weather leeches, whilst the maintopsail lay flat against the mast. Aft, her people were examining us with glasses, and forward were gathered her crew, the sight of Nelly at the wheel having, no doubt, excited great curiosity and interest among them. I was greatly anxious that the boat should return with a sextant, for with such an instrument on board I should feel comparatively strong; but my anxiety

did not prevent me from squeezing my sweetheart's hand, and owning, now that her resolution was taken, that I never wanted her to leave me; that I should have been miserable had she left me; that I never believed she would wish to go. "This does not prove that my love is unselfish, like yours," said I; "and yet, when I come to look at that ship and think of you in her, alone among strangers, journeying to a distant port, with a prospect of many weeks elapsing before we could meet again, if ever we *did* meet, I don't believe, even if you had resolved to leave me, that I should have let you go. How do I know what sort of a man the captain is? and his wife? and how they would feed you?—what sort of a cabin you would have? Here, bad as it is, we know the worst, in that way."

"And there is something more, Will," said she, with her quiet smile, pressing my hand. "What would have been our thoughts as the vessels separated? It was out of the question, dear, and so let us say no more about it."

In six minutes' time the boat reached the ship, and the mate jumped aboard. He got on the poop and conversed with a red-bearded man, whom I took to be the captain, who presently called the woman to him, and there they stood talking and looking our way. After a bit, they all three quitted the poop, and I saw the man in the boat hand up my chronometer. This made me pretty sure they would time my chronometer, though it would be of no use without a sextant; and as the mate's civility and good feeling had been very remarkable, I went into the cabin and brought out a box of tobacco, a dozen of the wine, a couple of meerschaum pipes, and an opera-glass, which I set upon the table, designing them as gifts to the master, his wife, and the mate of the ship; and at the same time I made a minute of the articles, so that they should have a place in the salvage account.

On returning to the deck, I found the boat in the act of shoving off, and in a few minutes she came sweeping alongside, and the mate again stepped aboard.

“I have brought you what you want,”

said he, with a good-natured smile, and he called to the men to hand the things up. The first thing he gave me was a sextant, of an old-fashioned make, but bright and in good condition. He then gave me my chronometer, timed to the Greenwich meridian by the captain's chronometers, a parcel of linen for Nelly, and a nautical almanack.

I asked him the lady's and second mate's charges for the linen and sextant.

"I am ashamed," said he, "to have to behave like a shopman to a man in your plight; but the second mate's a Scotchman, and the captain's wife," said he, looking behind him to make sure that none of his men were on deck, "would sell her teeth for money, if their yellowness were no hindrance to a market. The second mate says he couldn't part with that sextant for less than fifteen shillings, because it belonged to his father—though I know that to be a lie, as his father was a Thames waterman, and had probably never seen such a thing as a sextant in all his life. Mrs. Taddy, the skipper's wife, asks a

guinea for the linen, although I dare say she wouldn't get half a crown for it ashore."

I was both amused by and pleased with his embarrassment, that was a genuine nautical touch of nature, and begged him to believe that both the sextant and linen were so valuable to me I should have been glad to pay ten times what was asked. I then took him into the cabin, and made him drink a tumbler of wine, and showing him the presents on the table, asked his acceptance of one of the pipes and the box of tobacco, and to give the other pipe and the wine to the captain, and the opera-glasses to Mrs. Taddy. "What!" cried he, "after charging a poor shipwrecked lady a guinea for half a crown's worth of togs!" However, he thanked me cordially for my gifts, and I then brought him the money for the linen and sextant.

"Here," said he, producing a piece of paper, "is the latitude and longitude at noon to-day."

I looked at it, and found they made it $94^{\circ} 19' \text{ W.}$ and $33^{\circ} 50' \text{ S.}$ "Dash me if my calculations are so very much out, after

all!" I cried, with a rather justifiable feeling of pride. And indeed, as I afterwards discovered, my guess at the position of the island was only thirteen miles out—that is, calculating back to it by my dead reckoning.

A couple of men were called up out of the boat to hand down my presents, and after giving the crew a bumper of grog all round, I shook hands with the mate, who respectfully saluted Nelly and dropped into his boat. I waited until he was aboard his own ship and the boat hoisted before filling, and they then hoisted the ensign and dipped it thrice—a compliment I returned—as not only meaning to say farewell, but as expressing thanks for my gifts. No sooner did they swing their mainyards than the whole of the crew sprang into the rigging and raised a cheer that came down bravely to us. I waved my hat, and placing Nelly at the wheel, I, with the help of Matthews, swung the yards.

It was like getting a rock under weigh to fill upon that heavily laden ship. They set the mainsail, and yet she took so much time in starting that one would have

thought she was tearing at an anchor astern of her; whereas no sooner were the brig's sails full than the little vessel made a spring, just as though a warp that had held her back had been let go. She struck a little sea that was running at her and smothered her bows in foam, shook herself, put her nose down to it, and began to snore along the water like a racing yacht. Matthews and I boarded the main-tack, and by the time that sail was set we had the ship on our weather quarter, where she showed at her best; for there she was almost bow on, all her forward sails ballooning out towards us, her jibs making beautiful curves, every sail with a lancing of silver light along its lee leech, her shrouds standing like short bars of black iron under her courses, her main royal floating delicately on the summit of the tall pile of canvas with the short skysail yard just above it, and the flash of the green waters quivering in her polished jet black bows, out of which soared her long bowsprit and jibbooms, with the guys, bobstays, and the rest of the gear forming straight symmetrical lines as fine

as cobwebs to her martingale, and along her spritsail yard against the snow-white cotton-like sails which were as round and hard as ivory.

Close-hauled as we were, we drew ahead so rapidly that in half an hour's time we had her well on the lee quarter, with her low black hull fining down upon the horizon, and her sails stretching with exquisite daintiness of outline against the soft blue western sky ; but by this time we had grown weary of watching and talking of her, and besides, our appetites had become very sharp, for it was past three o'clock, and we had tasted nothing since breakfast. I therefore took the wheel, that Matthews might help Nelly to get some dinner.

My spirits were more buoyant now than they had been for many a long hour. With a sextant and Greenwich time aboard, and a tight and swift little vessel under our feet, I would not even allow that we were in any further distress. It is true that a couple of men, nay, even another man, would have been a precious acquisition ; but, as it was not impossible to sail the brig to Valparaiso

with only two hands to work her, so, seeing that in all other respects we were well off, our brig a smart one, water and food plentiful, and our health and courage high, our adventure was no longer to frighten me, the more particularly as I might count upon a substantial reward at the end of the journey, and perhaps obtain enough credit for the exploit to do me professional service.

We made a good dinner, our whole conversation being about the ship, that was by this time a mere white speck upon the running waters down on our lee quarter, and about the civility of the mate. Moreover, I found that the clothes which Nelly had got from the vessel were of a kind she greatly needed, and such as probably only a woman would have thought of sending. Her being equipped, therefore, to her satisfaction pleased me mightily, for her discomfort in this particular had troubled me a great deal more than I have chosen to say. Whilst we men had found plenty of clothes in the berths, Nelly had nothing but what she stood in; and when she had come aboard the brig she had been obliged

to let her clothes dry upon her body ; so you may form some idea of the inconvenience she laboured under as compared with us ; though beyond once saying to me that she wished she could find a roll of linen or calico, that she might make herself some clothes, she never uttered a murmur over her discomfort.

I relate these things without scruple, for they are among the stern facts of shipwreck.

As to her dress, it was a strong new merino, and promised to outlast her demands upon it, and to look well then ; for she had made a sort of canvas apron, which she wore over the dress, and which completely protected it from the grime of the galley and the soiling of the ropes she had sometimes hauled upon with me, God bless her ! The water had not done her boots much good ; but that very afternoon, after dinner, Matthews, noticing that one of her boots gaped at the toes, offered to mend it for her, and, taking it into the carpenter's berth, the fellow returned with it in about twenty minutes neatly repaired and calked, and then took the other and stitched it here

and there where it showed a weakness; so that if her boots were not as handsome as they were when she first bought them, they were quite as strong.

It was our fortune that my surmise that this breeze would settle into the south-east trades proved true; for shortly after sunset that evening the wind veered into that quarter, and the appearance of the clouds convinced me that we had got the trades. There is no mistaking these winds, for they bring up a kind of clouds that is peculiar to them, of a scud-like character, not very numerous, and sweeping across the sky with great regularity. As a rule, these winds do not extend below the parallel of 30° in the Pacific, but I have known them to be taken as low as 35° . Although we were braced sharp up, these trades would not allow us to hold as weatherly a course as I should have liked; yet they were of prodigious value to men in our position, by their promise of steadiness and freedom from shifts, and, I may even say, gales. Whilst they held we should have nothing to do but to go on sailing, with an occasional

standing by the topsail halliards should it breeze up. We might therefore count upon getting our rest, which was of immense consequence to us, whilst every hour was sweeping us nearer and nearer to Valparaiso.

For three days nothing whatever happened to break the monotony of our lives. We had settled into a regular habit of discipline; Matthews and I keeping watch and watch during the night, and remaining on deck during the day, whilst Nelly provided our meals, and now and again took a turn at the wheel.

From dawn to sunset we had our ensign flying half-mast and jack down, and through the night we kept the green lantern hoisted at the masthead; for I wanted help, though, as I have just said, the idea of wanting it did not terrify me; and the next vessel we sighted might be able to lend me the assistance we required.

The weather remained bright and fine, the moon as clear and clean as silver, and the sun hot, but tempered by the strong sweet wind and the passage of the flying clouds, and the sea a sparkling blue, rich

with the long lines of glittering froth, which broke and faded with the run of the joyous waters. In these three days we sighted but one vessel, a small schooner dead away to windward, and standing to the westward. But the speed of the brig was quite beyond my expectation. On Wednesday, the day after we had spoken the *Eagle*, our position, by observation, was $91^{\circ} 12' W.$, $33^{\circ} 15' S.$; on Thursday, $88^{\circ} W.$ and $33^{\circ} 2' S.$; and on Friday, $84^{\circ} 50' W.$ and $29^{\circ} 28' S.$ If these runs were not equal to steam, they were in every way remarkable as having been performed by a small brig close-hauled, with a single reef in her fore-topsail and her top-gallant and royal yards on deck.

It was Friday, and I had finished working out my observations in the cabin, and went forward to the galley, where Nelly was occupied, to tell her, as was my custom, the progress we had made in the twenty-four hours. The breeze was still blowing as steadily as it had blown from the first day of its springing up; and, with the fore and main bowlines hauled well forward, the tacks of the courses standing as stiff as

handspikes, the yards braced so sharp up that the rigging was as taut under the pressure of them as the weather shrouds, whilst the big jib was tearing at its sheet as if it would uproot the solid wood to which it was belayed, and not a rope but what was humming like a harp-string under the sweeping hand of the wind, the brig was smoking through it as if an ocean steamer had got her in tow, plunging sometimes so as to bury her martingale, and raising such a haze about her fore-castle that the rainbow arched in it seemed as fixed a thing as the curving foot of the foresail.

I stood talking to Nelly whilst she bustled about the galley, making a pretty picture indeed, with her white arms bared nearly to the elbows, her hair gilded with the sunshine that streamed through the galley door, her dress tucked up under her quaint canvas apron, and a flush on her delicate cheeks that made her eyes as bright as diamonds.

I told her how I remembered coming into this galley on the first morning after I had been left in the brig and overhauling the place for something to eat, and finding

some pieces of meat in one of the coppers ; and this set us talking of the number of things which had happened since that time.

“I have something on my mind to tell you, Nelly,” said I, “that has been there—well, I may say, almost since the day I found you in the *Waldershare’s* cuddy. Don’t open your eyes at me, my darling. It’s only this—that had the *Waldershare* lived to reach Callao, I should have asked you to marry me in that place ; but, since our destination has been changed, I mean—well, I will ask you to marry me at Valparaiso.”

She coloured up a little, but looked me very steadily in the face.

“Had I foreseen how this voyage was to terminate,” said she, “I should have asked you to marry me before we left Burmarsh. However, dear, we could not help these adventures.”

“No, nor need we regret them, my darling. But all the same, Nell, we will leave Valparaiso as husband and wife.”

“I am quite willing,” said she, coming up to me and putting her head on my

shoulder; "that is, if God permits us to reach Valparaiso."

At that moment Matthews hailed me from the wheel. I put my head out of the galley door and asked him what was the matter.

"There's a sail right ahead of us, sir," he answered.

I fetched the glass, and, going to windward, saw a white smudge upon the horizon in a line with our jibboom end. So little was visible of her that I could neither make out her rig nor which way she was heading. I returned to Nelly, and saw that she had been crying.

"Why, Nell!"

"Don't be angry, Will," said she, with a tremulous smile.

"Angry with *you*, my darling! If I have made you cry, I shall be angry with myself."

She kissed me, and said, "There is nothing that need make you angry. I could not help crying to think of our being married—I mean, after what we have gone through—no, it is not that. Oh, my darling!

I don't know why I cried—I don't know why I cried!" and she cried again.

"I'll tell you what it is, Nell," said I, clasping her in my arms. "Rough as your late experiences have been, the sea hasn't yet cured you of being a woman; and there never yet was a woman who could talk of marriage without tears." And so I found her a reason for crying.

We dined, as usual, in our maritime fashion on deck, and this day our dinner was a piece of salt junk, a bit of real beef—not the pickled hunks of mahogany which are shipped for sailors' eating out of London by the rascally purveyors, some of whom have been aldermen in their day. I had my eye on the sail ahead all the time, and, having discovered that she was going our way, forbore bothering with the glass until her hull was above water, and then, taking another squint, I found that she was a small fore and aft rigged vessel, with three square yards on her foremast—a brigantine as I might suppose, but she had no head sail set.

We were coming up with her very fast; indeed, so fast that, beyond the interest

of speaking and passing her, I found no excitement in the chase, for I supposed her to be a small, heavily-laden vessel from Australia or the South Sea Islands, bound, no doubt, to Valparaiso, and, as is usual with such vessels, with no more hands aboard of her than she needed. We held on in this way for an hour, at the expiration of which time she was about five miles ahead of us.

I was steering the brig, when Matthews, who had been examining the sail through the glass, turned and said, "I'm thinking yonder craft's a Government boat, Mr. Lee. She looks to me like a steamer, though there's no catching sight of her funnel. No merchantman of her size is ever so heavily sparred. Besides, she ain't lofty enough for a sailing vessel; and I reckon she can't have much canvas on her to let us overhaul her in this fashion. And see how she rolls, Mr. Lee."

"Hand us over the glass, Matthews, and catch hold here," said I.

I had another good look at her, and began to think that Matthews was right. She was

low in the water, but with a great breadth of beam; her spars were short and heavy, and she rolled like a collier. I watched her anxiously, for the difference between a Government steamer and a merchantman meant a great deal to me.

At last I caught sight of the whip at the mainmast head, and then I became as excited as I had before been apathetic. *She*, at all events, as a Government boat would have hands enough aboard, and could not, with any show of reason, excuse herself from lending me the assistance I required. In order that she might see our signal, I slackened away the flag halliards until the ensign blew clear of the cover of the topgallant rigging, and scarcely had I done this when, lo! the vessel ahead hoisted the glorious red cross of St. George. It was clear to me at the same time that they also shortened sail, though her stern being on a line with us, it was impossible to see what was doing aboard of her; but we crept up hand over fist until, in less than twenty minutes, I could see the sparkle of the metal buttons on the uniforms aft.

“An English gunboat!” I cried; and Matthews shouted “Hurrah!” in a voice that recalled poor Sinnet’s. “See!” I shouted, “they are luffing to shake her. We’ll go to leeward of them and heave to. Quick, Nelly; take the wheel and let the brig go as she is. Jump forward, Matthews, and let go the main-tack. Bear a hand! we shall be ahead of her!” And we again repeated the manœuvre we had executed when we hove to abreast of the *Eagle*. They had stopped their vessel’s way, and when we were within two ships’ length of her we backed our topsail and lay to within easy talking distance.

She was an English gunboat of about one hundred and eighty tons, a heavy, lumping craft of her size, brigantine-rigged, and carrying four guns. She rolled in such a manner as to slope her deck right over to us, so that one could almost have seen down her companion, and then back again until half her dullish copper was out of water. There were several men in uniform aft, with the rings denoting their grades round the sleeve-cuffs, and forward she was full of

blue-jackets, who watched us with their arms folded, and with that indescribable air of jaunty coolness that is only to be acquired by pocketing Government wages. She had all the remarkable trim, solidity, and cleanliness of the English man-of-war: her brass-work shone like fire, her decks were sand-white, her heavy guns gave a formidable character to her massively built hull, her rigging might have served for a six-hundred-ton ship, and it was a treat to look at the way in which her square canvas was furled.

The commander, standing a little apart from the other officers, hailed me through a speaking-trumpet.

“Brig ahoy!”

“Hillo!”

“Why is your ensign half-masted?”

“We’re in distress. We’ve only two hands to work the brig.”

“Where are you bound, and where are you from?”

“We’re from an island, not charted, in 98° W and 33° S., and we’re bound to Valparaiso.”

The answer to the question where I was

from puzzled my man, who took the trumpet from his mouth and looked for some moments at the brig, as though he supposed I was quizzing him.

"*Where* do you say you're from?" he presently bawled again.

I repeated the answer I had given him.

"I'll send a boat aboard of you," he shouted; and in a moment I heard the chirrup of a boatswain's pipe. A dozen hands ran aft. With great smartness six men and a sub-lieutenant were seated in one of the port quarter-boats, and pulling towards the brig. I had just time to unship the gangway when the boat was alongside, and a man of about forty years of age, with a red smooth face, stepped over the side.

There is no seafaring man in existence who could have a warmer admiration for the British navy than I. I know its best history by heart. I heartily admire its discipline, seamanship and pluck, and I never come across an English man-of-war without a swelling of the heart and a glad pride to feel that I am the countryman of the hearts of oak in her. Owning, therefore, to these

honourable sentiments, may I be allowed to ask why the British naval officer makes a rule of treating the British merchant officer with the utmost possible contempt, superciliousness, and arrogance? Is he aware that the merchant skipper and the merchant mate are, with rare exceptions, fine practical seamen, of great and varied experience, and qualified in a heap of ways to show the road to the naval officer? that to them are committed trusts of human life and property beyond anything most naval officers can dream of? that, in a word, the only difference between the naval and the merchant officer is, one receives Government pay, and has a large, well-disciplined crew and a powerful, well-found vessel at his disposal, whilst the other receives wages from private owners, and has to depend exclusively upon his own judgment, skill, and experience to bring his ill-found ship and the ragamuffins who fill his forecastle safely into port?

When my British gunboat sub-lieutenant did me the honour to step aboard the little brig, he convulsively jerked his thumb down at his waistcoat as an apology for touching

his hat, and in a very sharp, contemptuous manner asked me what I meant by saying I hailed from an island.

Upon which I related my story to him.

"I should like to see the brig's papers," said he.

I requested him to step into the cabin, and placed the papers before him. He looked over them, and then desired that I would raise one of the main hatch gratings.

"That you can do yourself, sir," said I. "I have but one man, and he is at the wheel;" for I had taken care to send Matthews aft when the brig was hove to, as I did not choose that Nelly should be stared at. Thereupon he called to some of his men to come aboard, who opened the hatch for him. He looked down, and saw that the hold was full of timber.

"That'll do," said he. "And now Mr.——"

"Lee."

"What help do you require?"

"I should be glad of some men to assist me in working the brig to Valparaiso."

“Four men should serve your turn?” said he, looking aloft.

“Four men will do very well,” I replied.

Without another word he went over the side into the boat.

The annoyance that this man's behaviour gave me was so far wholesome, that it repressed the extravagance of the happiness I should have felt at my piece of good fortune in tumbling across a gunboat, and getting from her the help which probably no other vessel than a man-of-war could have furnished to me. The boat was not four minutes in getting alongside her own ship; and when the sub-lieutenant got on deck, some confabulation went on between him and the commander and the lieutenant. Presently the lieutenant dived and brought up a chart, over which they grouped their heads. The vessel made a pretty sight as she lay rolling in the water, that flashed up all green alongside of her, though beyond and away to the horizon it was as blue as the sky. Now and again she would pitch, so as to jump two-thirds of her screw out of water.

Presently I heard the boatswain's pipe again; some other hands got into the boat, and some of her former crew left her; and instead of my uncouth friend, the lieutenant squatted himself in the stern-sheets, and the boat, containing ten men and the lieutenant—enough to carry a French frigate!—swept under the stern of the brig and hooked on.

I stood at the gangway to receive the fresh arrival, who proved a gentlemanly looking man, strongly sunburnt, with a pleasant, open face, and dark, handsome eyes.

“You have charge of this brig, I presume?” said he to me, first touching his cap in a ship-shape manner, and raising it as he looked towards Nelly.

“I have,” I replied, feeling less aggressively disposed by the accost and manner of the man, whose condescension, though marked enough, wanted the impudence of the sub-lieutenant's.

“I have brought you four men,” said he, “who will help you to work this brig to Valparaiso, to which port yonder vessel, which is her Majesty's gunboat ——, is

also bound. We shall endeavour to keep you company; but my instructions are, that you are not bound to keep by us if you find you can beat us when we are under steam, which will be the case shortly."

He went to the gangway and called, and immediately eight able-bodied, powerful seamen sprang on deck. They formed themselves into a line, and the lieutenant calling out their names, four of them stepped out.

"Those are your men, sir," said he.

I looked at them, and thought it would be a good job if the Merchant Service numbered a few such men in its fore-castles. Their hammocks and bags were passed up out of the boat and taken forward. Everything was done quickly and quietly.

"Now," said the lieutenant, looking aloft, "whilst my boat's crew are aboard, can they be made useful to you? I see you have but a stump of a topmast forward, and your jibboom doesn't look over lively. If you have a whole topmast knocking about," said he, casting his eyes on the spare-booms, "we'll have it up for you in a few minutes."

However, there was no spar that would answer for a topmast, nor could we have contrived a better jibboom; but I told him I should be glad if his men would cross the top-gallant and royal yards and get the gear rove. He spoke to one of his crew, and then, going to the gangway, told one of the two men who were tossing in the boat alongside to hand him up the chart.

“Have you any objection,” he asked, “to point out to me where your island is?”

I led him into the cabin, where I found Nelly standing at the table. She was going away, but he politely begged that she would not leave on his account, and entered, with a well-bred air, into a short conversation with her. He expressed his sympathy with her for the rough trials she had undergone, and congratulated her upon her escape and the prospect of a speedy release from the brig. He was much impressed, as indeed he could hardly fail to be, by Nelly's beauty and her self-possessed, lady-like manner. Her presence and the answers she made to his questions gave him a better notion of what we had gone through than any

story I could have related, and his manner altered amazingly. He seemed to forget his uniform, or rather, shall I say, he seemed to remember what was due to it. He addressed me politely, without any assumption of superiority; asked many questions, and expressed himself astonished and touched by the variety and severity of our adventures. He drank some wine that Nelly put upon the table, and then, opening the chart, asked me to pencil-mark the spot where I reckoned the island to be, saying that in all probability they would be sent to survey it. I gave him the latitude and longitude of it according to my reckonings, explaining that I had had no other data to go upon than the observations taken aboard the *Waldershare*. He thanked me, rolled up the chart, shook hands with Nelly, and went on deck, where I found that his men had crossed the yards, and were waiting for further instructions. There was nothing more to be done, so he ordered them into the boat, and away he went with his six men, leaving me four.

Whether they had banked their fires or

not aboard the gunboat I could not tell, but it was certain that she was under sail only when we overhauled her; but they were smoking up now, and the moment her boat was at the davits, some men sprang aloft and loosed the square-sails, and in a trice she was covered with canvas.

I waited until she had gathered way, and, placing one of the new crew at the wheel in order that Matthews might facilitate the work of the others by showing them where the gear led, I ordered the mainyard to be swung. In an instant the brig bit the water, and the spray began to fly. "Lay aloft and loose the top-gallant sail!" I sung out. Up sprang one of the men-of-war's men hand over hand. Used to the slow sprawling of the merchant sailor, I was delighted to witness this specimen of active smartness. Before he had been aloft a minute the sail was flapping and he was bawling out, "Sheet home!" "Overhaul your clewlines!" I shouted, and up went the yard. It was a new thing for me to see a top-gallant sail set over my topsail; but it was as much sail as the brig wanted, and

away sped the little vessel, with the foam standing as high as her hawse-pipes.

I had let the gunboat have the start of us, but we began to pass her as though she were a buoy. The smoke poured in a dense volume out of her funnel, and when she cocked up her stern, I could see the screw languidly revolving; so it was plain she had steam in her boilers, but not much.

“I’m afraid,” I said to the man who was steering, “that she will have to give us the end of her tow-rope if she wants us to keep her company.”

“She stands no chance with this brig, sir,” he answered, smiling. “She wants a gale of wind to go.”

It would have made any sailor laugh to see how she wobbled and bobbed and splashed, jerking the water away from her fat coppered bows like a bucket dropped overboard, not peeling it out to leeward as a sharp-stemmed vessel does; and yet she was so broad that I never noticed that she shipped a drop of spray, although she rolled so heavily that, had her yards been squared, you might have touched the water

from the end of her fore-topmast stun'sail boom end. As we surged abreast of her I sprang on to the weather bulwarks, and hailed her to know if I should shorten sail so as to keep by her. But the answer came back, "No; let her go as she will. We shall have our pressure up presently, and then we'll see."

In another minute we were ahead of her, clear of her smoke, and in half an hour's time she was two miles dead astern, rolling like a mast-buoy, although by that time she would have had her screw revolving as fast as it would go. An hour before sunset she was out of sight, and the little brig was tearing across the sea with the main royal on her, fogged with spray as far aft as the gangway, with the trade-clouds sailing bravely overhead, and the red light of the sun flashing crimson in the streaming fore-castle, and in the water that was roaring in little cataracts through the scuppers.

From this point my log-book gives me

no further adventures. It is merely a record of fine weather, strong, steady breezes, and rapid progress. Indeed, with a smart brig under me, and five able fellows to man her, it would have been a sorry business indeed if I had not brought the *Morning Star* to Valparaiso without misadventure.

We reached that port in nine days and five hours, from the time of our quitting the island, having carried our top-gallant sail the whole way, and meeting with but one calm, when we were a day's sail from the land, that lasted three hours, and was followed by a strong south-westerly breeze.

On bringing up in the spacious bay, flanked by its magnificent but treeless mountains, with the Almendral in the east, and the irregular scattering of houses along the beach, I immediately went ashore, taking the brig's papers with me, and called upon the consul, to whom I related the particulars of my voyage. He was well acquainted with the vessel's consignees, one of whom, he said, was a relative of the owners, and, he believed, the next of kin;

so that if, as it was probable, the captain and mate of the *Morning Star* were drowned, this gentleman would claim the brig. He promised to call with me upon the consignees next day, and meanwhile, having listened to what I had to tell him about Nelly with great interest, he asked my permission to accompany me on board the brig. We went together, and I introduced him to Nelly, and after complimenting her in the most handsome manner on the courage and fortitude she had displayed throughout her trials, he insisted that she should take up her residence whilst we remained at Valparaiso at his house, and promised her a hearty welcome from his wife. He also insisted upon my sharing his hospitality, and during the three weeks we remained at Valparaiso we made his house our home.

But he did me a greater service even than this; for he stood out for a larger sum from the consignees than they were willing to give, and obtained as salvage on the cargo and vessel seven hundred pounds for me, and two hundred and thirty

pounds for Matthews, besides substantial presents in money for the four men-of-war's men, who, it seems, might take gifts, though they were prohibited from claiming salvage.

With this money I secured a berth for myself and Nelly on board a fine ship, of one thousand one hundred tons, bound direct to Liverpool; but it would be three weeks before she sailed, so we had plenty of leisure not only to make the purchases we stood in need of, to examine the country, to receive and make visits, to venture an excursion to Santiago, which is eighty-five miles distant from Valparaiso, but to celebrate the most momentous act of our lives. In a word, Nelly and I were married.

The gunboat that had assisted us with her men arrived at Valparaiso four days after we had dropped anchor in the bay. She was in the bay on the day of our marriage, and among the guests invited by the consul to the entertainment he generously provided on that occasion, were the commander of the gunboat, the lieutenant, and the sub-lieutenant.

This day gives me the brightest memory of my life ; and yet I made a fool of myself too, for when I got up to return thanks for myself and Nelly, and spoke of what we had gone through, and why she had accompanied me in the *Waldershare*, and the loss of my old shipmates, and the great and unexampled kindness we had met with from the consul and his wife, I fairly broke down. Something marvellously resembling a tear hopped over my cheek like a parched pea on to the table, and I had to belay my eloquence for a spell, though all hands took care to cheer me at the top of their voices, and the lustiest cheer of them all was the sub-lieutenant's.

Matthews hung about Valparaiso for ten days, and I saw him frequently ; then he disappeared, and I have never seen nor heard of him since.

I could wish that God had permitted me to complete this record of many great mercies shown, by numbering among those who were saved from the loss of the *Waldershare* my little genial, kindly messmate, Thomas. The world is a big one, the sea is cramful of strange chances, and it may be

yet my fortune to meet him in the flesh. But I own that I think of him as a brave man gone to his account; and having tasted myself somewhat freely of the horrors of shipwreck, and knowing what a boat-load of people without food or water, leagues and leagues out at sea, means, I may be excused for laying down my pen and addressing myself to happier contemplations.

THE END.

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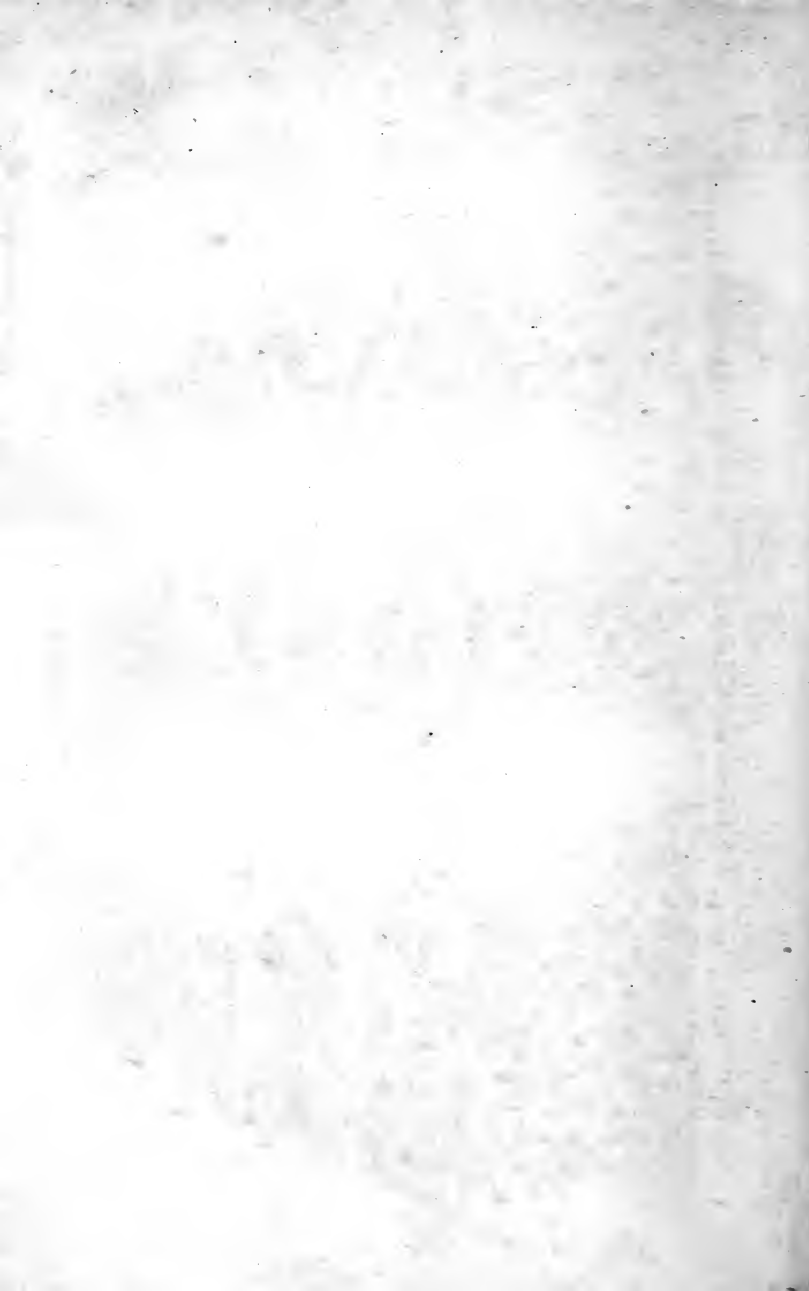
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